LM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

Brian "Head" Welch
Times of Grace
As They Sleep
A Day To Remember
Showbread
Venia
Memphis May Fire
ACL Festival Recap

THE CHARIOT

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January, February 2011 • *Issue #147*
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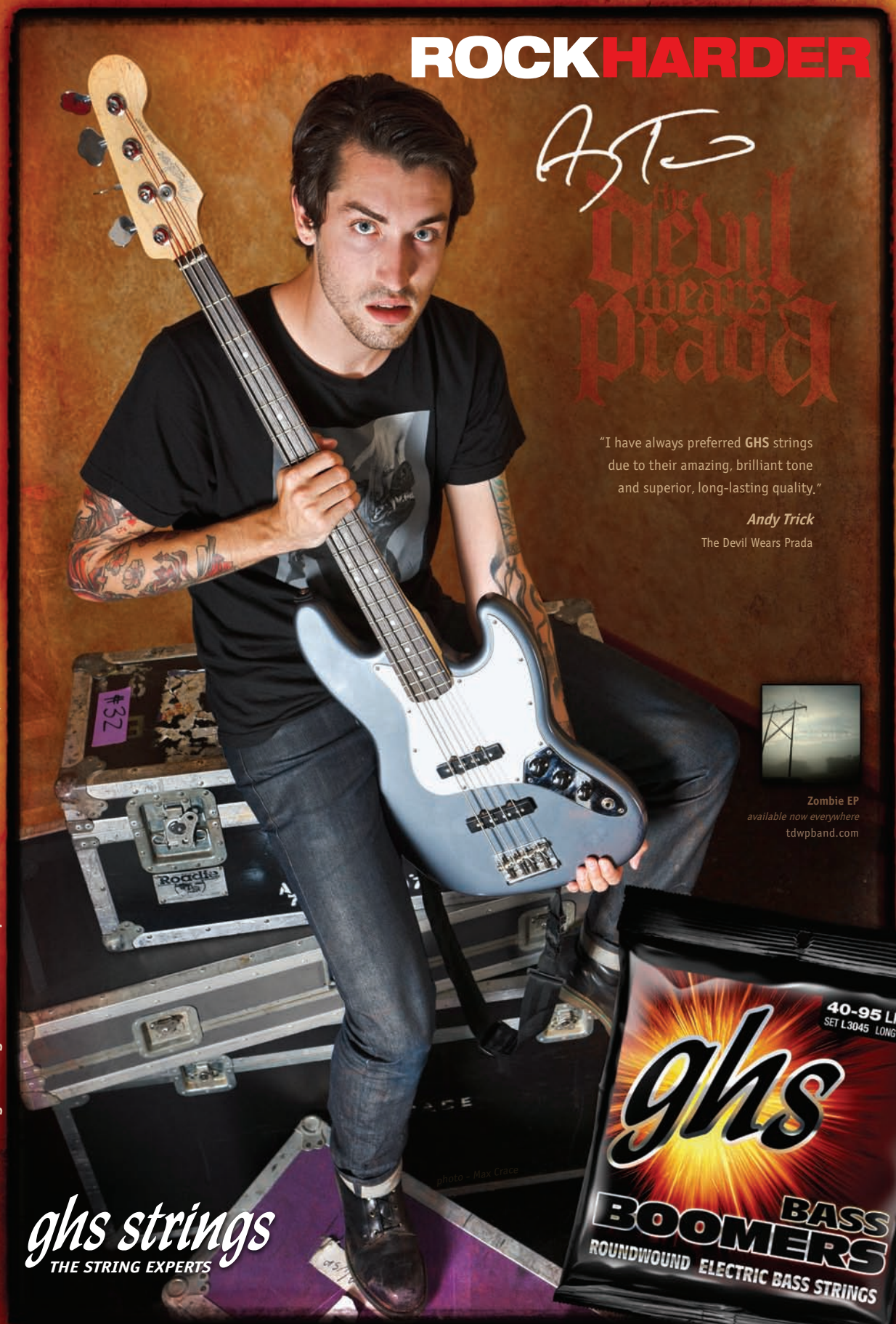

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

GOD IS IN CONTROL OF THE UNKNOWN FUTURE.

This issue is a miracle. It was like being sacked for a 19-yard loss on first down, taking us back to our own 1. Then a penalty put us back "half the distance" to the half-yard line. Third down was an incomplete pass. With almost no time on the clock, it's basically fourth and 29. I'm not sure we're going to make it, but I'm in this game to win, so I'm drawing up another play in the huddle. I love football, but apologize to any of our goth, emo or other non-athletic readers for the lame analogies. HM Magazine is losing money and losing ground. I hate the idea of going digital and leaving print, but I realize that it's better than nothing and I may not have a choice. Last September my wife and I switched places. I took a demotion of sorts, taking my duties at HM Magazine from full-time+ to part-time, while she went back to work as a nurse. This should have saved HM's cashflow bigtime or at least provided some much-needed breathing room. We've only sold half the ad space of the previous issue (which was at half the space we regularly sold between 1994 and 2008), which makes it hard to pay the large print bills. Please pray with us. We need a miracle. We need God.

It's probably no coincidence that a recurring theme I'm seeing as I proofread, edit and layout this issue is how suffering is used for our good. I'm submitting to God at this time (privately and publically, which is weird). I know He can be trusted to walk with me through this struggle. If HM's run in print is over or soon to be over, I praise God and thank Him for His gracious blessings and time here. If it's not the end, but just a dark blip on our journey, we praise Him just the same. He's worth more than my job and this magazine. This is a journey and you are invited to watch how it unfolds. Stay in touch with us via my blog at hmmag.com to see what's going on and how we're trying to keep on printing with HM Magazine.

This issue started out as "the issue taken over by The Chariot," but Josh Scogin's wife went into labor early and the pressures of getting ready for another tour took precedence and we are left with only a partial vision of what we dreamed up. But what we're left with (cover story, custom cover and poster, a story on Brian "Head" Welch" and general oversight into the content we featured) ain't too shabby ... at least that's my take. Tell me yours at our facebook page, hmmag.com or twitter. As we tally the votes in our annual Readers' Poll, we always take this ballot-counting time to show you our "Staff Picks." Check 'em out online at http://www.hmmag.com/2011/01/2010-staff-picks/

SPINNING AT HM NOW

KEMPER CRABB	*Reliquarium*	I really dig all the layered sounds and vibe here.
MUTEMATH	*Armistice Live*	Can't get enough of these guys live.
PUSHKING	*The World As We Love It*	All-star cast supports Russian band (incl. Alice C.)
FOR TODAY	*Breaker*	Love the speaking, love the slaying riffage.
TIMES OF GRACE	*The Hymn of a Broken Man*	In the car. In the office. Just hit "replay."
BRADLEY HATHAWAY	*A Thousand Angry Panthers*	Strong songs, killer lyrics. Dude makes good music.
CHAPTER 14	*Like Trees in November*	Chad Ackerman (Destroy the Runner)'s new band.

REGULAR

Letters 06
Live report 07
Hard news 08

FEATURETTE

Hail the blessed hour 12
Affiance 13
Venia 14
Rocky loves emily 15
Gideon 16
Brian head welch 17

FEATURE

Showbread 10
A day to remember says 19
The chariot 22
Times of grace 28
As they sleep 30

INTERMISSION

The chariot poster 24
Randy alcorn 27
Columns 40
Alternate cover 44

REVIEW

Music 35
Indie pick 43
DVD, book, & gadgets 45

Letters to the Editor

HM

IS THE HM PODCAST OVER?

I didn't realize there was a new podcast going until I saw your editorial in the last issue about all the ways to connect. I know at some point the old one stopped being updated and every time I would hit it there were no new episodes. Keep up the great work. HM rocks.
–Brian Bortree, via email

Ed – I'm doubly glad I ran that editorial now. It's another reason why we created the Update Page, (see QR Code on page 8). The HM Magazine Podcast did switch hands as far as who is producing it, which meant the old url was no good. Go to podcast.hmmag.com now.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

So I was looking through the latest issue (the UnderOath cover) and saw an ad for A Day to Remember's recent cd. I took it on good faith considering that you are a Christian magazine that, in the least, there would be no objectionable content on the album that you are promoting through an advertisment. So, I purchased it only the hear the f-bomb dropped in a few of the tracks. I should have trusted my better judgments and not bought the cd, but now I am out 15 bucks with a bad cd (not only is the content bad, but the music is awful as well!). So, I am writing just to make you guys (and gals) aware of the power of a simple advertisment. Love the mag though!
–Nathaniel Vann, via email

Ed – Thanks for separating your anger over the situation from your love and loyalty to HM the magazine. It's refreshing not to have everything jeopardized over this. This is a fine-line grey area that we've felt out. Obviously we don't grill every advertiser over essential Christian doctrines prior to accepting ads and we would thankfully accept ads from "secular" auto companies, soda, clothing, etc; but secular (non-sacred) music ads are a slightly different animal. Some ads have slipped by un-noticed by us, but this one was a calculated risk. From the feedback we've rec'd, it was a risk not worth taking. In regards to the specific band, read the So & So Says interview with them in this issue (page 19).

WISE JUDGMENT?

Hey I'm just letting you know The Word Alive is not a Christian band, I looked up their lyrics and I was really disappointed and the worst song I found was "2012." Also Blessthefall is not either. The lyrics to "Hell and Back" make it really apparent. I'm just letting you know, you are doing a great job keep up the good work.
–Daniel Ogier, via email

Ed – Appreciate the feedback. Defining who or what qualifies as "Christian band" these days (especially with a flawed label like that to begin with) is ever more difficult as more and more bands take their art out from inside the church's four walls and into the mainstream. By taking a lowest common denominator (and covering artists that are "of interest to Christians," it leads to confusion for those wanting quick answers. Because the potential answer implies eternal inheritance (which is serious), it begs a slow answer. When bands purposefully distance themselves from the definition, sometimes it's for noble reasons and other times not. Sometimes a little outside perspective and research, like yours, helps us figure this out.

A CRABBY RESPONSE TO CRABB?

I REALLY enjoy the devotions, and guest editors! But I can't get into the "Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art." (Maybe I don't quite see where he's going with it).
–Ben Branum, via email

Ed– Being a fan of Christian rock and metal, I can see how the premise of what he's talking about could turn you off. He is certainly not saying that there is no good art being made by Christians. Kemper Crabb is a fan of many cool, aggressive and radical art made by Christian rock artists. The premise would be that these artists are the exception to the rule and that, by and large, a lot of what passes for "Christian art" is poor, below average or, at best, very average and mediocre. If you can get past that premise, I think you can glean vast amounts of wisdom from this guy's writings. I happen to think that his column has some of the best words we print in HM.

BORED?

I like your magazine a lot, and I will definitely keep subscribing no matter what, but could you cover more than just the usual metalcore bands? I know metal is this magazine's roots and it's really popular right now, but I feel a lot of bands and genres aren't getting enough attention. I'd love to read more about Our Corpse Destroyed, The Rekoning, The Scurvies, Hanover Saints, Blood and Water and all the bands on that awesome *Ska Lives!* compilation.
–Mark Hodgman, via facebook

Ed – Cool. Good advice. We enjoy covering stuff that's out of the ordinary. Trust me.

JAN/FEB 2011	**Issue #147**
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SUBSCRIPTIONS [PRINT]	U.S.A. – $18, Canada/Mexico – $23, Overseas – $28
[DIGITAL / ONLINE]	Everywhere – $6
IF YOU MOVE	Please send us your new address, or you'll likely miss issues from your subscription. Send an email to service@hmmag.com
WRITE US	Letters/email must include full name. All submissions become property of HM Magazine, and may be edited/ condensed.
SEND TO	Letters 2 Ed, POB 367, Hutto, TX 78634 | letters@hmmag.com
ANSWERS	hmmag.com/faqsupport
FACEBOOK	facebook.com/HM.Magazine
TWITTER	twitter.com/HM_mag
MYSPACE	myspace.com/hmmag

HM Magazine is dependently owned and operated (Psalm 62)

Printed in the U.S.

FUELED BY

MONSTER ENERGY

HM Magazine (ISSN 1066-6923) is printed in the USA, published bi-monthly for $18 per year by HM, 205 Janis Mae Dr, Hutto, TX 78634. Periodicals Postage Paid at Taylor, Texas and at additional mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: HM, PO Box 367, Hutto TX 78634-0367

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LIVE REPORT

Austin City Limits Festival 2010

October 8-10

REVIEW & PHOTOS BY DOUG VAN PELT

(Austin, TX) This three-day festival hit its stride by at least its third year, so this past year's version (the ninth) runs like a well-oiled machine. Every detail from picking up trash, giving directions, as well as feeding and serving people with high quality tunes is top of the line. The only three things halfway worth complaining about are standard for any festival and could be the hot weather during the day, having to navigate through a crowd of 60,000 at a late-night show or having to choose between two bands performing at the same time.

Robert Randolph & the Family Band are not so much a well-kept rock and roll secret anymore, so his off-the-hook high-energy set was witnessed by a packed tent full of people and about three tents' worth of overflow peering under the three sides in front of the stage. They rocked "Ain't Nothin' Wrong With That" and "Dry Bones" to great delight and at one moment Mr. Randolph switched places with his cousin/bassist/part-time vocalist (**Danyel Morgan**) and RR played bass while his cousin tore it up on the pedal steel guitar.

Manchester Orchestra kept a roasting day crowd entertained with a full set, highlighted by "I've Got Friends" and sprinkled with humor near the end with the old song, "Turn Out the Lights, the Party's Over."

David Bazan played a laid-back set, complete with his question & answer segment. The most popular question seemed to be, "Why didn't you perform on the mewithoutYou tour?" His answer included the technical rider on his contract for this festival, which keeps artists from playing other gigs near the festival date.

Ashley Cleveland & Kenny Greenberg showed a capacity crowd a glimpse of why husband & wife teams can be so good. The band was tight and flowed seamlessly through a full set. Cleveland's guitarist husband was like a rubber man, his six-foot-something basketball player-like frame towering over his stratocaster, which he bent in every direction with lots of expression. Quite honestly, he threatens to steal the show with his antics. Cleveland casually explained that, "Most of my songs have a similar theme runnin' through them,. The first verse is usually about despair. Hopefully, by the end I get to hope," she laughs and goes on to talk about being broken down and freedom. "I've come to the place in my life where I'm a little familiar with both." She also made sure the audience knew a little bit about Blind Willie Johnson and his musical legacy.

Switchfoot seemed like they were thrilled to be playing at the large festival and they played like they had something to prove. They fired up their set with "Stars" and then went right into "Meant to Live." **Jon Foreman** climbed all over the light trusses on each side and over the barricade in the center of the crowd. The band shocked this reviewer with a fun send-up of the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage." **Jerome Fontamillas** and Foreman both attack a couple tom drums during "Free," while **Drew Shirley** coaxed some beautiful leads out of his guitar. The song sounds even better live.

[See a bigger ACL round-up at hmmag.com]

Clockwise from top: Manchester Orchestra's Andy Hull; Kenny Greenberg; Robert Randolph & Danyel Morgan; David Bazan; Switchfoot's Drew Shirley.

HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

UNDERCOVER
RE-RELEASE CLASSIC BRANDED

Few albums contain the level of emotional resonance or impact that Undercover's *Branded* did. After the entrance of new vocalist Sim Wilson, the band stepped up their game several notches. Having already begun to shed the earlier pop-punk sounds of their first two albums, the band's fourth studio release showed immense growth and maturity as they shifted toward a layered rock sound, incorporating hard rock, new wave, heavier punk rock, and even gentle pop flourishes. The lyrics became more mature as well, touching on subjects like depression, battling temptation, rejection of God, and even a song about the crucifixion of Christ from the perspective of Pontius Pilate. All in all, perhaps one of the greatest rock albums of the 1980's. Look for it on January 25th.

OVERCOME
HARDCORE LEGENDS RETURN

HM Magazine was pleased to host Overcome's show on its stage at Cornerstone 2010. Now the band is releasing a comeback album on Facedown Records (2/1). *The Great Campaign of Sabotage* will be Facedown's first release of 2011. The Phoenix hardcore legends led by Jason Stinson have returned with new music and new members, but their message remains the same. Says Stinson, "Be ready, a new flame is burning." Facedown's Jason Dunn elaborates: "They were the cornerstone of the label in its early years and teaming up with them instantly put our name out there for hardcore fans worldwide, both Christian and non. It's an honor to be able to still work alongside these guys and to be able to release the new album as Facedown #100. I could not have dreamed of a more appropriate release for this landmark in the label's history."

HM Magazine posts update page at hmmag.com

We've actually got so much going on at HM right now that we decided to create one place to compile all that's new (and who's going to complain about convenience, huh?). The QR Code* (Quick Response Code) above will take your smart phone to this update page. This is where you'll find out about the new app we're developing, new merch items (shirts, wristbands, coffee cups), our video playlist (regularly updated with hot new vids), the HM Magazine Music Festival, our Street Team activities, new HM Magazine Podcast episodes, the new Heaven's Metal Fanzine Podcast (with 4 new episodes recently posted), as well as other late-breaking announcements.

(* After downloading a QR Code reading software on your smart phone, you're able to photograph the small square pattern above, which is then decoded into a link.)

News bullets

Randy Miller, drummer of **The Myriad**, died on 11/5 after a long fight with a form of bone cancer. His smile and playing will be missed by friends, family and fans.

The Famine has posted a series of behind-the-scenes video blogs on youtube, offering insight into their next album release, *The Architects of Guilt*, which will hit stores on February 15th.

Kissing Cousins are almost done recording their new ep, and are working on a new video as well.

The new **Seryn** record *This Is Where We Are* will be out on 1/25.

The Colombian-based symphonic black metalers **Nephesh** will release their latest production, *Hated by this World*, as a limited EP (USA version) in February 2011.

We Came As Romans will release a *To Plant A Seed* deluxe CD/DVD edition on January 18th, featuring revamped packaging and artwork, bonus track "To Move On Is To Grow."

David Husvik, former drummer for **Extol**, is in a new band called **Doctor Midnight and the Mercy Cult**. They are planning on releasing their debut album in April.

Tooth & Nail Records' **I Am Empire** is debuting their debut album, *Kings*, on January 25th. Fans can catch I Am Empire live beginning 2/4th on tour that will also feature labelmates **Children 18:3** and **Hyland**.

Believer has finished tracking for their new album (their second for Metal Blade).

Ben + Vesper comment on one of their new songs: "'Knee-Hi Wall' was a stretch for me to record because it is an ancient song and I'm generally skittish about approaching old material. I never expected to make a disco-phonic/bloodhound-gang number, but that's what happens when you let go of your own agenda in the studio surrounded by the likes of John Mosloskie, Steve Oyola, Josh Stamper and **Sufjan Stevens**. It's wonderfully freeing."

Tooth & Nail and **Queens Club** present the *Friendly* EP available free for download.

Get late-breaking news once a week! Sign up for the HM e-mail list at hmmag.com

Photo: Evan Dell

Memphis May Fire

BY MEGAN GRAHAM

"MMF 2.0" Is how lead vocalist, Matty Mullins, described the heavier, thought-provoking songs found on their latest release *Between the Lies*. Teetering between the line of melodic and hard core they have created a distinct blend that systematically orchestrates their talents musically and lyrically. Going from the hard edge with killer guitar riffs of "Be Careful What You Wish For," to the transcending layers of "Vaulted Ceilings," this quintet have created the perfect formula to an album that is set to soar to a new level. When listing to the album there is an open transparency lyrically from the heart of Mullins. Sharing about his mindset for writing this album Mullins expressed, "I wrote about my views on the current state of mankind, being deceived by my mentors at an early age, my personal motivation to continue writing music and touring and the commitments I have made to myself, family and friends, to be successful in all of my endeavors."

Memphis May Fire, comprised of Matt Mullins (vocals), Kellen McGregor (guitar), Ryan Bentley (guitar), Cory Elder (bass) and Eric Molesworth (drums) have come a long way since their start in 2006. "We are constantly growing as musicians and as a band. Our new EP is getting a great response and clearly displays the all-around natural progression of this band over the past few years," Mullins commented. Having a self-titled album, their 2009 release *Sleepwalking*, and their latest, *Between the Lies*, under their belts, MMF continue to hold strong in a constantly expanding music industry.

Recording an album is always an exciting time for a band ready release new work. For MMF some of their great memories in recording *Between the Lies* came from time spent in the studio. With this album Mullins shares, "The recording process of the EP was so much fun. Our guitarist Kellen engineered and produced the entire EP, so the vibe was much more relaxed than if we were in someone else studio."

Stepping up their sounds while staying true to what makes them Memphis May Fire; *Between the Lies* could be that next new metal addition to the music libraries of continued and new fans alike.

Haste The Day recently announced that after 10 years of genre-leading albums and nonstop touring they would be calling it a day. Now the band announces their final tour – a 32 city trek – with support from **Mychildren Mybride**, **The Chariot** and **A Plea For Purging**, giving US and Canadian fans a final chance to see the band perform live. It begins the end of this month in Minnesota.

Times of Grace are getting ready to take the show on the road for the very first time. The band will embark on its inaugural tour, beginning February 1 in Baltimore, MD. and wrapping up in their native Boston, MA, on February 27. Straight Line Stitch and **War of Ages** will round out the bill.

Close Your Eyes will be hitting the eastern US with Shai Hulud, Monsters, **I The Breather** and Counterparts in mid-January and through half of February. I The Breather have released a video for the song "Forgiven."

Third Day will headline a massive 40-city tour across the U.S. this spring.

As I Lay Dying will do a full US tour, beginning on February 12th. We can't wait!

During **Flyleaf**'s live show, they close their set with **John Mark McMillan**'s, "How He Loves." They've since recorded a cover that's available on iTunes.

Underoath is shooting a video for the melodic track "Paper Lung." They're touring with Thursday, Animals As Leaders and A Skylit Drive.

Promoting its new *Until We Have Faces* CD, **Red** will be on the *Winter Jam Tour*.

Flatfoot 56 will be on tour with Authority Zero into February.

Nephesh have just signed with Nokternal Hemizphear.

Retractions: Oops! In last issue's review of *The Day Metallica Came to Church!* (Faith Alive) we misspelled the author's name (John Van Sloten). In our Sep/O issue we incorrectly identified You Are Not Alone's contact info. It is yanasite.com

I am Making Everything New

The following excerpt appears in the memoir *The Joke That We Play On The World*, which is a frenetic detailing of my last thirteen years with the band **Showbread**. Those thirteen years have recently come to a repeating culmination of sorts with the album *Who Can Know It?* released as a completely free download on November 16th, 2010 through comeandlive.com. The following chapter offers a brief glimpse into circumstances that birthed that album.

We got off the plane in Germany and immediately began to behave as though we were lost … and we were. We followed signs written in languages we could not read and eventually found ourselves at the airport entrance with no luggage, having passed through a one-way exit while simultaneously overlooking the baggage claim area, which was tucked away in a clearly marked side room. In America, baggage claims are positioned so that any idiot who gets off a plane has no choice but to pass it by before exiting the building, as if to say it is assumed we might forget our own luggage unless someone holds our hands and walks us directly to it. In Germany they give you the benefit of the doubt, and we immediately failed this test.

When we found an English-speaking clerk and explained our predicament, he glanced at the six of us as if we might as well be draped in an American flag and said: "Six idiots, huh?" Sadly, we had no rebuttal. He showed us to our bags.

This began what felt like an idiot domino effect. We had booked several European performances and quickly discovered they were impossible to reach in the time we had given ourselves.

"You're playing in London tomorrow?" A Dutch teenager asked us when we arrived at our hotel. "You better leave now, you'll never get there in time."

We were dragging around three huge boxes of Showbread merchandise to sell at the festival we had come to play and found that we had overestimated the demand. We were lugging it all around long after the festival had come and gone. Without the time needed to get to our other engagements, we were left with no choice but to cancel them and resign ourselves to an airport bench with a pile of boxes and luggage and a week before our flight left. Delivering the deathblow to our already crippled bank account, we bought two rooms in a hotel attached to the airport and spent the week lost in a daze of jetlag. We slept through the day and wandered the hallways all night when we weren't sitting in the hotel lobby watching Ernest P. Worrell videos on the Internet.

One day was spent sightseeing in Düsseldorf, but the bus ride alone demanded most of our money and we gave in to the fact that for a week we'd be sitting around in a hotel. Landon managed to accidentally fart in the face of a traveling German during the trip – a perfect metaphor for America's relationship with the rest of the world. Strangely enough, Alice Cooper and his band were also there and invited us to their nearby gig. Unfortunately we barely had enough euros left to eat once a day.

We allowed ourselves that single daily meal in addition to the continental breakfast of an apple and banana. We retired at sunrise and stirred in the evening when we ventured out into the airport to devastate our already crippled finances by purchasing flat, papery hamburgers from McDonald's. Over one such meal we began discussing the future of the band. Certain plans became a reality and, as always, certain unexpected events threatened to throw a wrench in the works.

Two months later, Drew and Garrett had both moved to Guyton, Georgia, marking the first time in half a decade that all the members of Showbread lived

in one area. Our contract with Tooth And Nail now fulfilled, we had decided to follow Chad Johnson in his seemingly absurd quest to create a record label where bands give their music away for free. Faced with what seemed like an opportunity to recreate the band, we decided to seize each and every aspect of said opportunity and truly reinvent ourselves.

Par for the course, we had begun writing songs that bared no resemblance to songs we had written before, only this time we had truly outdone our previous record of musical departures. Completely jaded by the old methodology of touring in a world of music we never believed in, we had decided to spend the year figuring out new ways to write, record, release and perform music. We were also up against an obstacle completely new to our band: how do we fund our band while giving our music away for free?

In the midst of so many new and unique uncertainties, the band was feeling more unified and dedicated than it had been in years. Mike however, had discovered that he was not in the same place and was unwilling to continue down the challenging road we had decided to embark, so we asked that he resign his position. After over nine years, Mike was no longer in Showbread.

The four of us, shocked and saddened by this turn of events, were pressing forward with new resolve. Every week we were meeting to write new songs and study the Bible together. We were being rewarded with the most productive sessions and exciting new material to date.

Chad's vision of a free record label, now called Come&Live! had begun to lift off the ground and Showbread announced our new partnership with the label and our plans to give away our next record as a free gift. Using a fundraising website called kickstarter.com we set out to somehow raise what seemed like an impossibly large amount of money in an impossibly small amount of time ($13,000 in 90 days.) By offering a tiered succession of gifts for different levels of donations we made ourselves vulnerable to our supporters in saying, "Without your help, we literally cannot make this album." We remained faithful that provisions would appear, but naturally apprehensive that the road to acquiring them might prove difficult and stressful. The fundraiser was launched and in less than a week we had surpassed our goal. When the 90 days concluded we had raised a grand total of over $33,000. It seemed that Jesus had chosen to surprise us and that our supporters had once again gone above and beyond the call of fandom to prove themselves truly gracious and generous people.

We found ourselves back in Weed, California in the fall of 2010 in the midst of a completely liberating experience. After all the years of dramatic and polarizing highs and lows, something was in a kind of simultaneously "back to formula" and reinvented state. There were no record label tentacles reaching into the process and no ominous potential profit considerations looming in the corner. Then there was the music itself: fully developed, candid and beautiful. We were recording these songs that sounded like our interpretation of R.E.M. and Genesis. Somewhere in our minds, everyone was aware we would be stretching our audience further than we ever had before and no one was afraid.

Something incredible was flowering in the creation process. The producers were telling us the music was powerful and moving in ways they could not pinpoint. I was sitting in Radiostar studios six years after we had arrived there to record our first album and the weight of everything that had come to pass occurred to me. Every flimsy strip of wind I had at some point clung to had come and gone and all that was left was Jesus. All that was left was Jesus and the task He had laid on our hearts twelve years earlier. The task continued to stir there in my heart, stronger than it ever had before.

Our plans to reinvent the band had outrun their origins. We became something entirely different for the better. After all we had done and all we had been through we were somewhere new with as few ideas on how to proceed as we had had when the band began. There's something about the unknown that makes it every bit as frightening as it is exciting, but at this point in the long life-span of Showbread, fear no longer makes any sense. There is only the mission and the unknown both locked in some awkward embrace while the rest of us step forward, no longer capable of any fear at all.

The Joke That We Play On The World is a memoir of faith and madness with the band Showbread that will be released in February, 2011 through joshdies.com

✖

BY JOSH DIES

Album: *Anastasis*
Label: Raging Storm
Release Date: February 7, 2011
Members: Dan, vocals; Matt, guitar; Justin, drums; Joey, bass
RIYL: Impending Doom, For Today

myspace.com/hailtheblessedhour

HAIL THE BLESSED HOUR

Hail the Blessed Hour is a five-piece metal band originating from Flint, Michigan. Forming in 2005, they've spent the last five years honing their craft, leading up to their latest record, *Anastasis*, which drops in February.

Guitarist Joe Slosar describes their music as "a well-rounded collection of their influences." With the latest addition of seven-string guitars, HTBH has a refreshingly rhythmic sound. The new album has a deathcore influence, yet with cadency and heaviness integrated together eloquently. HTBH credits their maturity – musically and as individuals – for their progression on the new record. The first single "Apostle" reflects what the fans can anticipate to hear from the new record. "It hits hard from the get-go and never lets up," explains other guitarist Matt Walker. *Anastasis* is a raw and aggressive composition of musicianship, yet beautifully exposes HTBH's softer side at times as well. It's inevitable that genres are fading and meshing together these days and their desire is to "be one of those bands that pushes the envelope."

The defining aspect of the well-oiled machine that is Hail the Blessed Hour is their passion for Christ. They use their music as a way to break ground with people. HTBH bears in mind that Christians are called to be set apart, and are unwilling to conform to society's popular beliefs. "We, as Christians, have been aiding to the non-belief of non-believers," Walker says while explaining how our actions speak far louder than our words ever could. Frontman Daniel Warren notes that the majority of Christians have forgotten they are involved in daily spiritual warfare. This irking concern is something that resonates with every true believer. This frustration translates through their music, particularly in the lyrical content. Warren continues on the subject by explaining that the intent of the album is "a resurrection of the Christian faith; a call to war."

Despite having a very cutthroat sound, they carry a message of hope. They have set themselves on a seemingly relentless pursuit to preach the good news. Being in the music industry gives them a platform, and they have chosen to use their music as a "stepping stone" for people to approach them. Their greatest desire collectively is to show love and acceptance to all. HTBH is a key example of the aforementioned subject about "actions speaking louder than words." Their message is reflected and reinforced with their selfless actions. They make themselves available, without restrictions, to any and everyone. And the biggest inspiration behind the band is the possibility of impact. The idea that their music might make a difference in someone's life is what keeps them going. Their greatest hope is not self-seeking, but that their music would bring people to Christ. "Even if it's just one person, that would make all of our time and effort worth it," Warren claims.

Regardless of what trials they are faced with, they refuse to lose sight of that focus. "We decided a long time ago that this was going to be a ministry and if it ever stopped being that, we would cease to be a band." That mutual consensus and strive for a greater purpose is what gives HTBH an exceeding ambition that goes far beyond a passion for music. The band is more than an occupation or hobby; they see it as an opportunity, an opportunity to further the Kingdom of God; an opportunity that His will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

"As long as He is glorified, we are satisfied."

BY KRIS WELCH

Album: *No Secret Revealed*
Label: Bullet Tooth
Release Date: November 30, 2010
Members: Dennis Tvrdik, vocals; Brett Wondrak, guitar; Dominic Dickinson, guitar; Cameron Keeter, bass; Patrick Galante, drums
RIYL: The Devil Wears Prada, Haste the Day, Blessthefall

myspace.com/affiancemusic

Photo: Brian Bowers

AFFIANCE

It's no secret that most up-and-coming bands endure their share of difficulties and lineup changes. It's about whether they have the work ethic, drive and willingness to sacrifice to get what they want. It's having the faith and confidence to be men of their word, which is one of the translations of Affiance that the members have grown to understand in the past few years. "What's funny is I didn't choose the name," vocalist Dennis Tvrdik says. "I joined the group after the name was picked. It was an ex-guitarist and he was just looking for a cool medieval word. It's an Old English and French word that means to betroth in faith and confidence. That's pretty much what sums it up – we're men of our word."

Getting to that point of finding five men of their word definitely wasn't the easy part. A few years ago, after playing in the band for fun, the members found a more solid lineup and a desire to take it in a more serious direction. At that point some of the members decided that they weren't cut out for it. Their final lineup didn't take formation until September of 2009; they even recorded two songs from *No Secret Revealed* with only a studio drummer, which helped them know they were on the right path. "When we heard it recorded we knew, finally after years of trying, we finally found our sound and we were so stoked that the four of us were just in the car driving home to Cleveland with tears in our eyes," Tvrdik recalls.

When asked what made him want to take the band seriously through all of the adversity, Tvrdik says it comes from believing and knowing his purpose. "I believe that God has guided me in this direction for a reason. I believe that he gave me talent for a reason and ability to write music or lyrics or to have charisma on stage – he gave that to me for a reason. So just knowing in my heart that this is what I was supposed to do at this point in my life and then having the will and being willing to sacrifice comfort and stability so that I can follow my dreams.

"The word 'freedom' and the word 'security' are not synonymous. In order to be secure something has to be holding you or securing you and to be free is the opposite. So it's like security comes at a price and freedom comes at a price. I always viewed it as, do I want the security of money in the bank, food in the fridge and being able to go out with my friends or have a car or be able to go to Cedar Point regularly or do I want to follow my dreams, sacrifice everything so that one day I can make a difference and say that I did that," he says.

While on tour earlier this year with No Bragging Rights and Across The Sun in New Jersey, Josh Grabelle, president of Bullet Tooth saw them perform and was astounded with Tvrdik's vocals. In a genre where guttural growls and shrill screams are the norm, Affiance defied those standards with soaring vocals. The band spent time getting to know Grabelle and his goals. The end result was a record deal and now, the release of *No Secret Revealed*.

The quintet from Cleveland, Ohio, comprised of Tvrdik, Dominic Dickinson/guitar, Brett Wondrak/guitar, Patrick Galante/drums and Cameron Keeter/bass, conveys some of these religious ideals in *No Secret Revealed*, as well as political themes. Tvrdik describes it as addressing the abuse of power. "It's basically that *No Secret Revealed* is about the power elite, whoever they are, whether it's the government or the higher up of a corporation or people who secretly run things behind the scenes," he says. "They don't want us to know their secrets and they're not going to reveal them."

With the album released on November 30, Tvrdik says that there is a great feeling of accomplishment. "I feel like our hard work is paying off. It's really like I just randomly get smiles on my face. I go online and I see reviews or I see our album on iTunes," he says. "I hope that people can take away from it the desire to seek truth. And from a Christian standpoint, I don't feel like I have to get on stage and talk about Jesus Christ, I don't have to get on stage and talk about the Bible because if I'm hoping people will seek truth and I believe that truth is God, then they will have no choice but to find God eventually."

BY ANNA HARTENBACH

Album: *I've Lost All Faith in Myself*
Label: Blood & Ink
Release Date: December 7, 2010
Members: Chad Urich, vocals; John McCully, guitar; Ben Kocinski, guitar; Matt Bakken, drums; Chanse Goetz, bass

myspace.com/veniamusic

VENIA

Photo: Heather Vaught

One of the biggest bands to emerge from the Minnesota Christian music scene is Venia. Hailing from my local region, this five-piece is poised to be a force in the Christian hardcore scene for years to come. Playing hardcore with a Spirit-filled message, Venia is a band out to play music and spread the Word.

Having already put out two full-length albums on Blood and Ink Records, with 2008's *Convictions* and 2009's *Frozen Hands*, Venia released their latest endeavor, *I've Lost All Faith in Myself* on limited-edition vinyl and digital release. This is a four-track EP, which showcases the direction the band has been heading in since *Frozen Hands*. Showing the heavy sensibilities of the band, along with some melodic undertones, *I've Lost All Faith* is a solid hardcore output sure to please fans new and old.

As stated on the Blood and Ink Records page, "During a relentless tour schedule over the past year (including runs with Bitter End, The Mongoloids, Donnybrook, Grave Maker and Call To Preserve), Venia crafted four new songs of intense hardcore that once and for all prove their genuine tenacity. Drawing influence from the likes of Buried Alive, Madball and Merauder, this newest taste of Venia's musical direction will impress both fans new and old. Recorded by Mike Reaves (Swamp Thing, Bracewar, Down To Nothing), mixed by Chris Dowhan (Down To Nothing, Bracewar, See You Next Tuesday, Worn In Red) and mastered by Kim Rosen (La Dispute, Capital, Jeremy Enigk, Saints Never Surrender)."

The EP starts out with "Crux." Littered with heavy riffs, chunky chords, and an overall heavy tone, this song starts *I've Lost All Faith* off with a bang. The next tracks, "Mouth of A Liar" and "Number's Game" follow this same formula, of just being downright heavy, but yet there is enough melody to suffice for the fans of more melody-oriented hardcore. Breakdowns are used nicely in this EP, being sparse enough to not overwhelm the rest of the band's style. The final track, "The Call" features the guest vocals of Jason Berggren, the original vocalist of Strongarm. This creates a nice contrast of vocalists, and makes this song the highlight of *I've Lost All Faith*. Venia has put out a very solid example of their brand of hardcore. Even with this impressive release, Venia still is a band to see in concert.

Having lived in the same state of Minnesota that Venia is based, I have had the opportunity to see Venia's live show on multiple occasions. If you're looking for a band with energy, passion and a desire for the audience to have a good time, look no further then Venia. Their shows are fun, heavy and the band knows how to get a huge pit going in no time. They have an avid local fanbase and are one of the premier Minnesota hardcore bands.

They also take their Christian faith seriously. They are serious about making music with a message, and promoting a positive outlook. They aren't preachy about it at their shows, as they do not want to alienate people who might not believe the same thing they do. This is why the band does what they do. They want to spread the message of Jesus Christ, as well as a positive outlook on life. This is why they create music, why they put out albums and do shows; to spread the word of God to as many people as they can.

BY NICK HABISCH

Album: *American Dream*
Label: Tooth & Nail
Release Date: November 22, 2010
Members: Brandon Ellis, vocals; Andrew Stevens, guitar; Sean Kick, guitar; Wood Simmons, bass; Pete Kalinowski, drums; Stephen Hull, keyboards

myspace.com/rockylovesemily

ROCKY LOVES EMILY

After talking to Brandon Ellis, vocalist of Rocky Loves Emily, the words "sincere" and "humble" come to mind. His demeanor while talking about their new album *American Dream*, which was released November 22, is that of disbelief and overwhelming gratitude. Many times he mentions how thankful he is for this opportunity that's been given to the band and how God has blessed them more than they could have imagined.

This opportunity refers to the band signing to Tooth & Nail records in March after an adventure that most up-and-coming bands might be scared to take, especially in a rickety old van. "We were at Copeland's last show and an A&R guy from Tooth & Nail came up to us and said he had heard of us and he was interested. We didn't hear back from him immediately after that appearance, but we got a phone call about a month later like, 'Hey drive from Detroit to Seattle in two days if you're actually serious about signing to Tooth & Nail.' We were like 'Are you kidding?' It basically came out of nowhere so we dropped everything and jumped in our van that we didn't think was going to make it, but it did," Ellis recalls with laughter.

Rocky Loves Emily formed from jam sessions in the auditorium of Rochester College in Michigan where some of the members were attending school. The six-piece, comprised of Ellis, Pete Kalinowski behind the kit, Stephen Hull on keyboards, Wood Simmons on bass, Sean Kick and Andrew Stevens on guitars, decided to start taking their jam sessions seriously towards the end of 2009. When asked how they came up with the band's semi-quirky, yet hard-to-forget name, Ellis shares that it came from his love for the '90s film, *The Three Ninjas*. "Personally, it's one of my top five favorite movies. There's this little boy in the movie named Rocky and at one point I was the same age as him," Ellis says. "When I was little he was my hero, because he was so cool-looking and he actually had a crush on this girl named Emily, who I also had a crush on. And it just worked."

After posting a three-song EP on their MySpace to positive responses, they took their act on the road. "A lot of bands get booking agents and publicists and all that stuff from the start but we just wanted to figure out the industry on our own and be hands on. It was almost like those books, like *How to Book a Tour for Dummies*, we just had to figure it out," Ellis says. Figure it out is exactly what they did, aiming to play in the same cities every few months to build connections and a fanbase. They also played more than 70 acoustic sets in Hot Topic stores, which helped generate noise for the band.

In a downturned economy where 9-to-5 jobs are scarce, that American dream and once-golden vision of white picket fences and children playing in the yard might seem like a long shot. So what is the American dream? For Rocky Loves Emily, the American dream is touring, building connections and performing. "Being in my 20s, there's a lot of pressure from society to settle down and stop wandering around in a broken-down van and get a normal job. I was thinking about that and what everyone calls 'the American dream,' like settling down and raising a family and all of those things. I really like those things and I would like to do that, but for me I feel that my calling in life is very (much the) opposite of that.

"I was thinking one day, 'Does that make me not American? Does that make me not living my dream, just because I'm not doing the status quo?' Then I realized that this is my American dream, it's maybe not *the* American dream, but it's still my pursuit of happiness, my pursuit of doing what's right. I guess that's why we called the album *American Dream* – because it still is our American dream even though it isn't what's normal," Ellis says matter-of-factly.

With influences like Tom Petty and Bryan Adams, Rocky Loves Emily have a unique pop-rock sound that is sure to appeal to people across the board. "I really like the songwriting structures of people like Tom Petty and Bryan Adams and the way their guitar riffs and vocals fit together. I think they set the tone for a lot of bands today – whether the bands realize it or not," Ellis says. "That was a big influence going into the studio and I think because of that we probably sound like a few bands that are happening right now, but we're really trying to do something that's our own whether people think so or not."

At the end of the day, Rocky Loves Emily have come a long way in the past two years. "I think I've learned a lot since we've recorded this EP and I think we've all learned a lot about ourselves. We would really love to be known as a band that is just sincere and loves the Lord and shows that to people in conversation… Maybe just a band that isn't ashamed to say that they love God and isn't ashamed to live that lifestyle," Ellis states.

"I don't know, if somebody walked away from our show saying, 'Those guys are super weird, but at least they're not ashamed to be saying what they're saying,' that would be pretty tight, because we'd be planting a seed. But I'll be honest, I can't say that we live even close to that, but in an ideal world I think our hearts always want that."

BY ANNE HARTENBACH

Album: *Costs*
Label: Strike First
Release Date: March 1, 2011
Members: Kevin; Daniel; Jake; Daniel; Timmy

facebook.com/gideonal

GIDEON

Photo: Ryan Russell

In the world of hardcore music there is a young band on the rise. Gideon, a four-piece group from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, is ready to break out and be heard. Having only been around for two years, Gideon is poised to make a name for themselves in this realm we call hardcore.

Formed in August of 2008, Gideon has had an interesting history. As the band states, "We have been through a few member changes and even changed our sound. We used to be a metal band. Birmingham, Alabama has always had an awesome hardcore scene, so we started going to lots of hardcore shows and felt a really positive vibe and always had tons of fun. We really got into wanting to be less technical, have catchier riffs and just have more fun. So we wrote some more hardcore-sounding songs and really love the direction our music has been going since then. We started touring full-time in May after three-fifths of our band graduated high school." Being such a young band, Gideon has pulled out all the stops to make themselves known. They are a hardcore band, but their influences go beyond that genre, with bands such as P.O.D. and Thrice being influences, as well as hardcore cohorts Bury Your Dead, Terror and Advent.

October of 2010 marked a big step for Gideon as a band. They were signed by Strike First Records, which is a subsidiary of well-known Christian hardcore label Facedown Records. When asked how they felt about this, the band said: "It's great. We are in the studio right now recording our debut album, which is coming out in February. We are really stoked just to see where things are going to go."

The band sees this as a blessing, but they also know that being a Christian band in the music world can be a struggle. "Being a Christian band can be tough sometimes. We have gotten some MySpace messages telling us how stupid it is for what we stand for. And sometimes you run into anti-Christian bands and even people who've told us we could make tons of money if we weren't a Christian band. It gets disheartening sometimes. Luckily, though, we all keep each other accountable. When one of us is depressed or upset the others are there to encourage and support each other." Even with these things, the band maintains a positive attitude and continues to play music with a positive message, because as Gideon says, "our whole message is love. We feel that as Christians we are supposed to love one another whether someone believes the same thing as us or not. Our whole goal with this band is to make music people would enjoy listening to – just so we make some type of connection. Our music ranges from several topics within Christianity. Some of them are unity as one body, corruption in the church and how we are all equally bad. I guess more of our music leads to things that bother us with Christians. They are usually things that we personally are guilty of."

The band is primarily a hardcore band, but says that, "we really try to combine tons of elements of rock, metal and hardcore into our music. Though the elements might not be very unique on their own, we combine them and try to create something unique." The band has an upcoming solo tour, which will be hitting the Midwest/West regions of the country in January. Make sure to keep Gideon on your radar.

BY NICK HABISCH

BRIAN "HEAD" WELCH

Book: *Stronger*
Publisher: Harper One
Release Date: November 30, 2010

brianheadwelch.net

Photo: Megan Graham

As I sat in the third bench of a 15-passenger van, covered in blankets, next to a venue in Montreal, Quebec Canada, I talked on the phone with former Korn Guitarist, and New York Times Best-Selling Author, Brian "Head" Welch while he rested at a friend's farm in Idaho enjoying a home-cooked meal and a day off from tour. My 14-year-old self would be so jealous. Who am I kidding; my 26-year old self is jealous!

We discussed his new book, *Stronger: Forty Days of Metal and Spirituality*. A book consisting of 40 days of daily devotionals that touch on stories from Head's past and present pain and suffering and how Christ continues to make him a stronger person.

"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" One devotion is based on and continues with a time in Head's life when his band Korn was on tour with Metallica, System of a Down and Kid Rock. Korn was at the height of their career and were invited to travel on Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich's jet for the night. Before Head left he picked up an eight ball of cocaine and ended up giving it out to all the other guys on the plane. The night was supposed to be a cool experience, but he soon saw all of their smiles turn to frowns. One of the members of Metallica lost his ability to speak because of the coke Head gave him. Even then God was speaking to Head, but he could only question what he was doing with his life. This devotional includes a pencil drawing, by Head's friend Joshua Clay, of Head sitting on top of a plane with straws coming out of his nose with coke coming out of the straws.

This isn't your typical devotional, but it's real, and transparent, and if anything describes Brian "Head" Welch it's just that. This devotional talks a lot about pain, and what it means to share in Christ's suffering, so one can share in His glory and how God can turn all things around to work for good. All the devotions are based on personal experiences from Head and some devotionals refer back to stories from his New York Times Best Seller, *Save Me from Myself.*

If you want to know if God is real and that you can be one with Him, and can have a real relationship with Him, or if you are going through a lot of hard stuff and want to know how to get through all the pain, or if you want to understand intimacy with God without being overly weird like the people you see on TV, then this is the book for you.

This book can be found at your local book stores, and online November 30 and if you haven't seen Brian "Head" Welch live in concert you can see him December 17th playing along with The Chariot and To Speak of Wolves at The Rep in Rochester, New York presented by the Whosever's (shameless promotion).

BY JONATHAN (WOLF) KINDLER

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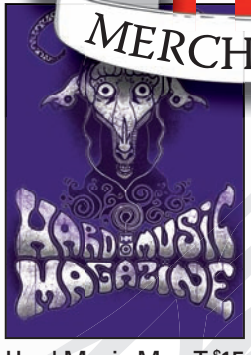

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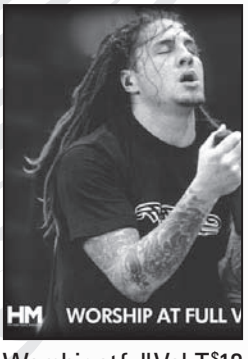

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What **A Day to Remember** Says

THIS WAS A FUN PHONE INTERVIEW WITH BASSIST JOSH WOODARD OF A DAY TO REMEMBER. WELL, NOT REALLY... THERE WAS A BAD PHONE CONNECTION AND THE DANG THING SPUTTERED TO ITS COMPLETION AFTER THREE DIFFERENT HANG-UPS/DROPPED CALLS. IT WAS FUN WHILE IT LASTED, THOUGH, AS YOU'LL GET TO KNOW THE BAND WHO ADVERTISED IN OUR LAST ISSUE AND INSPIRED A LIVELY LETTER TO THE EDITOR IN THIS ISSUE. SIT BACK AND READ ON (FORTUNATELY, FOR YOU) WITH NO INTERRUPTIONS.

Photo: Adam Elmakias

Top 5 reasons why it's good to be in a band in 2010 heading into 2011?
Wow. If I'm kind of spaced-out, it's because we just got back from Australia today – back to Florida – and I am really tired. Top 5? Here we go… I don't know, I just think the simple fact of playing music in general. If you love it and get to do it for a living, that's an awesome thing. There's one. Two? Um… Good Lord! This is hard! Five? I don't know. There's a lot of opportunities to tour – to tour the world. Back in the day there weren't that many opportunities to tour all over the world for bands like my band. There's a bunch of different people out there that want to hear a different kind of music, so…the fact that I get to travel the world and do what I love to do, that's definitely a big one. Um… Three? This is really hard. You honestly might've stumped me here.

No worries. Just off the top of your head a few is just fine.
Yeah, those two. I don't know. My band has always been the kind of band that's up for challenges. No one's ever really believed in us from day one. It's kind of cool to always be the underdog in our mind. We always love to show people that we've got something cool going on here, so I think in 2010 in an era of records not selling and downloading and stuff, we know that still plays a huge part. People are downloading our record, but we're pushing our record pretty hard and it's doing pretty good, so I don't know. I guess the opportunity to go out there and try to show people that we can still do it – we can still be successful at this.

On the flipside, the worst 5 things about being in a band these days?
Ummm, to be successful or to be the type of band that we want to be, which is just to play to as many people as possible, try to gain as many and push what we're doing to as many people as we can seems to be, you need to be fighting and out there. So, I guess being away from my friends as much as we are. That's a sacrifice that we have to make, so there's one negative. I kind of touched upon it in the positives, but it is difficult with people downloading music and stuff. The industry is kind of in a weird place right now. So, I would say the era of illegally illegally downloading music is kind of a negative. Three? There are so many bands. We've never viewed this as a competition at all, because it's not to us. We'll do it whether people like my band or they don't like my band. We're just doing it because we have fun doing it. We just want to, like I said, push what we're doing, but there's so much out there – so much music, so many different bands, so many different tours that you constantly are – you're fighting for these kids when the economy is down. You know, 'Do I spend my $20 to go to this show? Or do I spend my $20 to go to this show?' It kinda sucks that the economy is having an impact on what we do a little bit. I think that's… Those are three pretty solid ones.

What's the most disconnected your head has ever been during a live show?
It might be a tad graphic, but I can recall back whenever we weren't even doing anything huge. We were playing a skatepark in Tampa. I don't know if this is going to be the lane you were looking for, but I had to use the restroom really bad for the entire set and I probably played horribly because I was concentrating on getting through the set without making a mess – if you get my drift.

So, what feels better: a great riff or a chorus that everyone's singing along to? And why?
I'm going to say probably a chorus that everyone is singing along to. I don't know. Riffs are awesome and you go to a show and you just hear something that sounds really sweet, there is something about an awesome riff, but I don't know. Having a whole room singing a huge chorus – there's something powerful about it. I love it – especially being in a band where we try to write a bunch of good choruses and try to have a lot of sing-along parts. It's something I've always loved about my band and I love going to shows and being a fan and doing that. One of my favorite bands is New Found Glory and they have tons of songs to sing-along to. So, I would definitely say probably just big choruses – there's so much more involved for

everybody, you know, the band and the crowd, so I'd probably just say that.

What Separates Me From You… favorite songs to play live, why?
"Sticks and Bricks," which is track one on the record. I'm gonna say … geez, this is tough. "This is the House that Doubt Built." I love that song. "You Be Tails, I'll Be Sonic" are probably my favorites to play. Nothing against any of the other songs at all, because I love playing them all, but there's just something about it. The first track, "Sticks and Bricks," we're opening our set. Oh, and "2nd Sucks." We've been opening our set with "2nd Sucks." It's powerful. It's aggressive. I just love that deal. "The House That Doubt Built" is just a powerful, big song. It's just really cool to play it on stage. I love it. It's a little variant, some progressive, heavy stuff and just a big rock song that's really fun to play.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?
What do I think of Jesus Christ? I think Jesus Christ is cool. I don't know. That's a rough question. That's a toughie, man. Umm… He's… I don't know. If that's your thing, that's your thing and that's awesome. That's not negative or positive. I don't know. That's a tough question.

What do you think of His claims to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"
I'm going to have to go with "No comment" on this. My band is not a religious band. We do not take any religious stance. There is a mixture of beliefs in my band and, I don't know, we just kind of like to keep it like that. So, I'm going to stay ambiguous as to what my views are.

One random morbid fear I have is being locked up in a mental hospital, enslaved by psycho-active drugs and locked doors. What is a random morbid fear of yours?
Morbid fear? Jesus! Umm… These are some crazy questions.

We customized 'em for ya, because we knew you were coming back from Australia.
No, this is good, though. It's good to have interviews that make you question, you know, question yourself in your answers. Let's see… Honestly, it sounds cliché, but it's being buried alive. There's not… Like you said, I'm not being locked up in… You said, "Psycho-active drugs?" Is that what you said?

Yeah, like being trapped in a mental hospital where you can't get out, because they're just drugging you.
It's nothing crazy like that, but I think solitude and confinement… Like, I hate being alone in general. I don't like to be in a room alone. I don't like to drive alone, so I think being buried alive would literally be the worst thing in the world to me. As cliché as that answer might seem, that would be my true answer.

Tom Denney leaving the band? Why? What kind of impact did that have on you guys?
Tom Denney decided to leave the band because he wanted to focus on a career that didn't involve him touring and being away from his family and friends and loved ones. He was also really involved with a girl that he ended up getting married to shortly after, so he wanted time to focus on a career in his hometown. It affected us in the sense that we were like, "Okay, the band is not breaking up because of this," so it just made us go into the, "What's next? Who do we find?" So, we found who we wanted to have in the band and … I don't know. We remain close to Tom. He's a friend still. I actually, before we went to Australia wasn't able to play a show in Los Angeles, because my best friend was getting married and I was the best man, so I missed the show and we flew Tom out to the show and he played bass for the show. That's how close we are still. He's still a close friend and I'm sure if we ever needed him to fill in or anything like that, he'll do it. I don't know if he still can help with writing and be a part of A Day to Remember as much as someone can be while at home, but he's a good friend and he still works with the A Day to Remember ensemble.

How much of the musical landscape seems fake, phony and superficial and how much of it feels authentic and important? How do you deal with the trendy parts of today's scene?
Honestly, we don't associate ourselves with anything that is any of that. And none of that has meant anything to us in the slightest – like being trendy or being credible or any of that stuff. If you get ahold of our really, really old stuff, it's really bad music. It's literally a hardcore band and a pop punk band mixed with not good musicians, creative music. It's just a band that couldn't decide on what it wanted to be, but we were that, because that's what we wanted to play. We wanted to play hardcore and we wanted to play pop. If it didn't make sense, it didn't make sense, but we were doing it because we liked it. So, we kind of always just kept that mentality. We were just going to do what we want. If people catch on to it, they catch on to it. So, being trendy and all that stuff has never mattered. Being a popular band has never really mattered. This wasn't supposed to be what it's become – like, in the slightest. It's just kind of taken off. We feel fortunate and we feel grateful, but being something has never meant anything to us. All we wanted to be was honest and true to what we were doing.

The following is a question I don't really want to ask, but I will anyway: What is the significance of your band name?
Everybody asks this and I really wish we had a real answer, but we don't. It's a name that an old guitar player's girlfriend came up with just because she thought it sounded cool. He ended up being ejected from the band, but the name just stuck while he was gone. There is no meaning behind it at all. Maybe we should start making up a reason. Just have a bunch of random ones out there.

Not a bad idea. You already touched on this a little bit, but your album did really well with opening week sales. How does it feel to have this level of success?
Like I said, we just feel super grateful. Interviewers kinda get real mad when you give them a round-about answer, but we're really humble people in general – with anything, not just having to do with our music. I don't know. Without kids being into our band and coming out to our shows and stuff this band doesn't exist. We love it. It's awesome. We're so grateful. We feel fortunate and we're going to continue to try to create music that we feel the kids will like, but stuff that we've always liked writing and playing. I hope it continues to grow, but if it doesn't, like I said, it's been so much more of a ride than was ever expected or supposed to be, so if it ended tomorrow I will have the best memories of my entire life with me for the rest of my life. I couldn't say anything more about it. Super grateful.

What foreign countries have been a pleasant surprise to play in? Why? (phone cuts off)
I would say Japan. We were kind of nervous. We didn't know what to expect. We heard that kids are really into music, so we were excited about that. We didn't play huge shows over there like we were some massive band over there, either, but the kids were so awesome. Like, they'd go to our hotel rooms before we played and after our set. They'd want stuff like kids do, but they'd give us gifts and stuff. They knew every word to our set. It was just awesome. I don't know. I would definitely say Japan. It definitely sticks out. It's just something that we didn't know what to expect, but it was just awesome.

If someone were to make a movie about the band, who would play what member? And what characteristic would they emphasize or exaggerate?
Whoa! Alright. I'm going to ask you to repeat the question and then think of it as I listen. Geez. John Cusack looks like my lead singer, so I would say he would definitely have to play this "you really can't figure him out" kind of role, like a mysterious guy. Just quiet. Maybe comes off as an (bleep), because he's so quiet, but he's not. He's the sweetest person you've ever met if you actually take the time to sit down and talk to him. He's just really, really shy. I'm trying to think of actors that look like members of my band. I don't know. We've never really had that conversation – what actors we look like. I would like to have somebody that would play really over-the-top energetic, crazy. I'm outrageous. I'm the person who would do something stupid all the time. So, someone that could handle that role. My drummer would need to be played by someone kind of forgetful – a really talented drummer, obviously ... who comes off as this kid who has natural talent. I don't know. Just real goofy, young kid. He's the baby of the band at 20 years old. The guitarist, Neil – another one of me, pretty much, just outrageous. Really funny, just saying something stupid at all times that makes everybody laugh. Kevin, my other guitarist, should be someone who's really into action and dressing well and stuff and just this amazing guitar player that knows he's a (bleep) guitar player and that's just how it is.

Where do you see UFC/MMA evolving in the next 10 years? Why?
I'm a humongous fan of it right now, so I hope it keeps the track that it's going. I like to see the merger with WEC. I'd like to see it continue to grow and just take these sub-leagues – the leagues that were not as popular, like Strike Force, WEC, kind of just engulfing them like they just did with the merger. But maybe making them their minor leagues, where you have to work up to be a part of – the UFC is like the major leagues. I don't know. Maybe see something like that happen. I hope it doesn't turn into, like… Not that I'm against it, but I like that it's real. I hope that it doesn't become like a pro wrestling thing. I wouldn't like to see that happen, where it's fake or there's characters and stuff. I wouldn't be interested in watching it anymore if that's the way it went.

How important is the visual side of your art to you? Why?
Visual is… I think it plays a big role. We all grew up listening to

bands and being really into certain videos and stuff, too. So, we try to come off as a band that… We try to get creative. Most of the time it just comes off as us being silly retards, but that's who we are, so that's pretty accurate. I don't know. Especially recently… We just did a video for our single that's out right now. It's called "All I Want." It's just about being on the road and being in a band and touring. So, we got a lot of bands – that we're friends with or toured with or look up to and all that kind of stuff – to do cameos. They are all doing different parts of the song and they sing the song and stuff. That means a lot to us. I think it's kind of a unique idea. I think from here on out we're going to try and have really meaningful videos that kind of tie into whatever the song's about.

Nice. Let's talk about gambling. How does one develop a "skill" when it comes to gambling? What are these skills and how would you coach them into someone?

No matter what… unless you're like this full-fledged, just incredible counter… Those people do exist. Professional blackjack players… I don't think there's too many skills you learn, other than just … there's this thing called "Basic Strategy." I only play blackjack, by the way. I would say that there's this thing called the "Basic Strategy Chart." Just go and learn that to a T. That sets you up to be able to play blackjack mathematically, which is the correct way. All it is is just a series of numbers and there's x-amount of cards in a deck and it's a way to play any two given cards that you've got depending on what the dealer is showing. So, if you learn that, you should be set and if you want to take it to the next level, you can by learning how to count. You can learn that online in a day. It just takes a long time to practice and get down.

"I think Jesus Christ is cool. I don't know. That's a rough question. If that's your thing, that's your thing and that's awesome."

What are your favorite interpretations of your current album cover?

Favorite interpretations? If you've seen the artwork, it's kind of plain as day. It's a dude who's separated from what looks like the normal world and that's kind of… That's exactly what it is. I haven't heard anything outrageous or anything like that. Most of the people that take a stab at what it means are pretty dead on, so… I don't know. I haven't really heard anything too crazy or out there, like, "That's not it at all." Most people get it – especially after you open it up and see the additional artwork other than on the cover. It all comes to make sense. It's just about, you know, being separated from what is normal. You know, all the normal things that people do when they go through life – dying, losing family members, getting married. Being separated from all that. It's kind of the way we feel in a certain sense. I think people who tour and stuff can relate to that.

There's a quote in your recent press release, which says: "People used to put on 'shows' back in the day and we're bringing that back." Tell me about those aspects of your show…

I don't want to try to change that quote, like '80s bands, but think about those shows. It's like pyro and this big stage setup. It wasn't what you'd think you're gonna go see today – a backdrop and maybe scrim. Now we're trying to bring back … Yeah, you're going to see your favorite band or a band you like playing music – songs you really like – but you also get more. You're paying a lot of money and we want you to see more than just a live show experience. We want you to be able to see this, like, performance. Like, see all this stage setup and this production and stuff. It's something that has meant a lot to us and up until now we just haven't had the means to invest in ourselves. And now that the band's got a little bit more popularity, we can invest in things we think our fans are really going to like. We're always going to be continually investing in ourselves, just to get a better show for our fans. That's what means the most to us, so you'll see bigger, crazier every single tour that we go on. If you saw us on our *A Market Tour*, you saw something that I hoped you hadn't seen in a really long time. We had a huge video production screen and this catwalk and ramps and stuff. We just want to keep upping it until we're at a point that we can have pyro and go crazy.

What do you think about the guys in Close Your Eyes? What are their strengths and weaknesses (if any)?

We didn't really know what to think, because we had never met them. I had never even listened to the band that much, but they ended up being one of the coolest people to hang out on that tour. They were all really nice guys. I think everybody in the band rode with us at some point on our bus. Super sweet kids... Really nice to hang out with… They're a band that I think has a lot of potential. They've got a lot of songs that I think are pretty good right now. I think they will continue to grow the more they're on the road and they're going to grow tighter as a band as they write better stuff. They're really excited about what they're doing. It kinda reminds me of my band a couple years ago. It's really cool to see a band that's really excited to go on tour and kind of grind it out like we were. They've got a pretty cool future ahead of them if they just stay on it.

How will The White Stripes be remembered in music history? Why?

To be honest, I never really listened to that band in my entire life, so I couldn't tell you if they will or won't have an impact on music history.

That's it for me, unless there's anything you want to comment on or say.

Ah, no. That sums it up, man. Sorry about the break-ups with the phones.

No worries. It happens. Appreciate your time today, Josh.

No worries. Thank you.

✖

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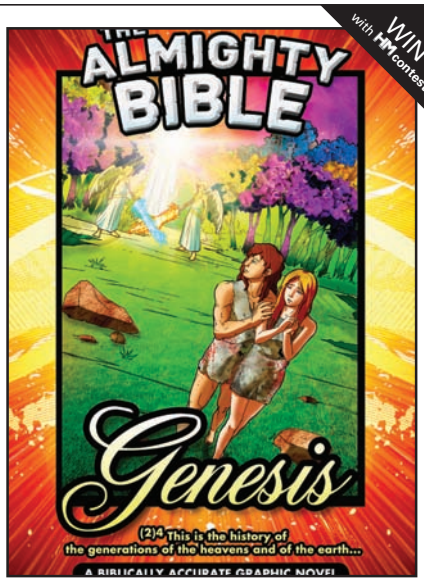
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AN INTERVIEW IN THE MIRROR: THE CHARIOT ON THE CHARIOT.

Since you guys sleep in the van a lot and keep everything pretty DYI, what are some tips on staying clean on the road?

Josh: Well, if I am honest, we probably aren't the best people to ask for this, because we aren't really known for our hygiene on the road. But we do have a few tricks we use to wash/dry our clothes. We don't usually tour with too many clothes because most of us don't want the bother of having to keep up with the big, bulky bags. Also, I personally, just don't have that many items of clothing in the first place, so that forces us to wash them pretty frequently, at least underwear and socks and such. These methods are obviously when you don't have access to a washer and dryer machine. If you ever stay with someone, and have the time, then that is the easiest route. The first method of washing clothes, Wolf came up with, it is actually not that bad. It is free and it is one of the quicker ways to do a decently thorough job. The only real drawback is that it involves a shower, which can sometimes be as hard to come by on tour as a washer machine. First you jump into the shower still wearing the dirty clothes. Then you wash off like normal, with soap and everything, but obviously you are washing the clothing on your body. As you wash an item you can take it off, ring it out and place it out of the way of the water. Keep doing this until you have no more clothing on and then commence to wash your naked body as normal. Another thing you can do is to take any and all of your other dirty clothes and throw them in the shower, on the ground before you ever start. The warm water constantly hitting the clothes helps clean them a little as well as constantly stepping on them as you wash your body. After you are clean you can take the clothes off the ground and give them an extra, individual soaping if you want, it will only help. This is one of many methods to washing clothes that we do. The

BY JOSH SCOGIN

trickiest part of washing clothes is actually drying them, because of the amount of time it takes. We do have a couple of tricks for that as well. When throwing them into a dryer is not an option, the best way is to hang them up outside on a sunny day (obviously), but when you don't have the time for that either, one of the most effective ways is to just hang clothing outside the windows as you drive down the road. This can be a super quick way to dry them, but most people can't handle the constant sound of flapping against the van that goes on. To avoid this a little (if you use a trailer to carry around your equipment) you can just close up the back of your trailer with your wet clothes dangling from the back. I have only, once, lost a pair of pants doing this method. As long as it doesn't rain on your trip, your clothes will surely be dry by the time you arrive at the venue.

Since the vast majority of your time is actually spent driving from city to city, what are some things you do to keep entertained while in the van or while out and about in between the cities you are playing?

Josh: There are actually a couple games you can buy from the store that are "travel friendly." *Mad Gab* is pretty fun and it has very few parts that you have to keep up with. This game is decent, because the driver can even play it while remaining (mostly) safe. *Catch Phrase* is another game that we have in our van. I don't think we play it, full-on, like you're supposed to, but we sort of make our own version of the game. One game that you can play, if you have a little time, we call, "You're the Man Now." It is pretty simple, you walk into a thrift store and one person just calls out another person and says, "You're the man now." At that point, person A can pick out any clothes that they want person B to wear and vise-versa. Then both have to try on the clothes and come out and everyone is able to have a laugh. The point is to pick out the most ridiculous clothes you can find; usually the old lady section is a great start. You have to make up a punishment for any individual that refuses to come out wearing the clothes that were picked for them. But that can change from game to game or whatever. Just recently, we came up with another game called, "Word of the Tour." In this game you pick a word that everyone says quite frequently and it becomes the word of the tour. Anytime anyone accidently says that word they have to throw whatever is in their hands to their left. This has actually gotten crazy at times, I have seen iPhones get tossed dangerously close to water, I have seen computers thrown, I have seen lots of food thrown, etc, etc. I am sure there are others, but I can't think of them right now.

What's the craziest thing to ever happen on tour?

Josh: I am not sure if this is the craziest thing to ever happen or not, but it is the only story popping up into my head. One time, we were playing in Providence, RI, and before the show we went walking to the mall near there. Along the way I found a guy lying up in this wooded area. He looked very odd, so we sort of called out to him a couple of times and he didn't respond. After a while, we gathered up enough courage to throw a stick at him and once he didn't budge we knew that he was actually dead. It was crazy, I had to call 911 and report him in as dead and everything. The lady on the phone asked me what about him made me think he was dead and I had to tell her that we threw a stick at him and he didn't move. It was a crazy day, to say the least. Unfortunately, I have no idea why he died or anything, we were never able to follow up on him or anything like that. Still something I will never forget.

Are there any funny quirks or traits that any of you have that are out of the ordinary or funny?

Josh: Apparently, I hold a burger weird, it is just normal for me, but apparently it is odd. I know both Wolf and I are terrible at spelling. David is great at math, you can ask him anything and he will totally know the answer. Stevis is amazing at the recorder. Remember those little clarinet/flute-like things you had in elementary school? Yeah, well, he can play nearly anything you throw at him. I think he is also addicted to getting tattoos, he loves them.

Photo: Brian Hall

Photo: Brian Hall

HM The Chariot

What made you want to get tattoos in the first place?
Stevis: I never really cared about tattoos until 7th grade when I was big into Blink 182 and seeing Travis Barker COMPLETELY covered in tattoos. I've only ever wanted a lot of tattoos. I did not gradually get to a point where I wanted to be covered, it was just like a light switch. One day I didn't care, and the next I wanted tons and I have wanted tons ever since.

Do you have any great stories about any of your tattoos or are they all just random?
Stevis: Well, my 12th grade English teacher's name is above my left knee. It says "Thank you, Ms. Gauntt." I was a pretty awful student all through high school and it came down to about a week before graduation and I did the whole "crawl to the teacher's desk and beg for extra work." She really wasn't having it at first, but I bugged her ALL day EVERY day. I said as a joke, "Hey, if I get your name tattooed on my arm, will you pass me?" Initially she said no, but the next day she came in with directions to a tattoo shop where she had gotten some work done in the past and said, "Okay ... if you're going to do this ... go somewhere that I trust is sanitary." I was stoked, the problem was I was only 17 at the time (not old enough to get tattooed) and my birthday was ON THE DAY of graduation. So she really had to trust that I'd actually do this. I did it soon after graduating, but I didn't get it on my arm, and I didn't get it done at the place that she wanted me to. I had my friend Joey do it, and he had never tattooed anyone in his life prior to doing mine. It looks decent, though. I emailed her a picture of it and she didn't believe it was real, so I went back to my high school on their first day and showed it to her and she definitely cried. Happy tears.

How did the band come together, as it is now? Where did the members come from and how did all of you meet?
Josh: Well, the way everyone has come to be in The Chariot is very crazy. Each story is amazing and very divinely intervened. In all honesty, some of the stories are so "coincidental" that I am confident the Lord had His hand in all of it. It would take way too long to tell everyone's story, but I will pass it on over to David and let him tell how he came to The Chariot.

David: Well, I thought playing drums was pretty much out of the picture once my band, The Rein, broke up after 5 years. It was definitely a bummer, but I was neck deep in school. I wasn't happy doing the whole "college thing," so every day I prayed that God would use me for greater things. I didn't really care about my 4.0 GPA. I felt like it was all a lie, not part of me or what "my story" was supposed to be. This was around the spring of '08. I had just started working for a CPA Firm when Stevis, our current guitarist, called me and told me that Josh was looking for a drummer. I couldn't believe it! I remember driving to my parents' house and thanking God for the opportunity, but I couldn't take it. I'm an idiot. I basically said, "Thank You, Lord, for answering my prayers, but I'm gonna have to pass." The truth is that I was scared to tell my family. They worked so hard to make my life comfortable and provide me the best education. So, I didn't say anything when I got home. I was bummed, completely unhappy with my decision to let that opportunity go and continue with school. My close friends would not let me hear the end of it. They knew I was searching and without them I wouldn't be here right now. Several months later The Rein had its last show and Josh came out to see us play. We grabbed a bite to eat after the show at the (oh so wonderful) Waffle House and that's when my heart changed. That's a story for another time, but it was clear that I was supposed to play drums for The Chariot. I remember this drive home a little better, because it sucked! The thought of telling my parents made me sick to my stomach. I sat them down, told them I was leaving school and quitting my job to join a band, and asked for their blessing. It was the hardest thing I have ever done and I couldn't do it again – not without the Holy Spirit. I cared about my family's approval and I also knew I'd be giving up the security of my home and education. I believe that God sent an angel during that time to guide me. It's funny, I always have to jog my memory every time I am asked this question. It's a chapter in my life that's now complete. Though I know my family still worries about me, I don't seek for anyone's approval, nor do I have to have my parents' blessing like I needed before. As for school, I'll go back if I'm called, but right now I'm serving God without a degree. I was raised a "Christian," but the reason I am one today is because of life experiences that have drawn me closer to Jesus and His amazing life here on earth. That's how and why I'm with the Chariot.

Is there any stories that would be great to know about *Long Live* – either writing or while recording?
Josh: Well, the first thing that comes to mind is the last track of the album. The person that you hear, that is sort of laughing and talking right at the beginning of the track is actually Matt Goldman. The last track features this percussion-sounding part near the end of the song that has everything from drums to pens clicking to switches being flipped on and off and plenty of other things. One of those things was actually a pair of wire cutters that Goldman had in the studio and they just made a real unique sound. So, he went out to actually record just opening and closing them over and over and over, since we never just copy/paste things into protools he had to actually "perform" this in real time. Needless to say, his hand started cramping up and he ruined the first take by talking and claiming that he could no longer hold them and so I took what he said and put it at the beginning of the song and every time we hear it, we still laugh. Usually, if something makes us laugh then we know we will keep it. Another thing we did that is pretty rare amongst bands is that we purposely did not practice the first track of the album, "Evan Perks." We wanted the song to have a little bit of that hesitation feeling that you can't get if you have practiced the song hundreds and hundreds of times. Therefore, since the song depends 100% on the "feel" of it, we never practiced it. I had a poorly recorded home demo version of the song that I showed everyone when I came up with it, but once everyone was into the idea, we rarely even listened to it. What you hear on the album is actually like the 2nd time ever that we played it together. The first take was a train wreck. The 2nd take was the keeper. True to the impulsive fashion that we usually work well with.

How did the video for "David De La Hoz" come up? (youtube.com/thechariot**)**
Josh: It was actually wild how it came about. It was not a pre-planned, organized thing or anything. It was actually an idea that came up about a couple of weeks before we went forward with it. We knew we wanted to record a song live and filming it only made sense, so we could show it actually being tracked. Then someone had the idea of placing a few tricks in the video (i.e. 2 drummers in the kitchen). From there, it just kept evolving and evolving into what you see. We were changing things up until about an hour before we shot it. The video you see is also only our 2nd take, which surprised all of us. We all thought it would take at least 5 or 6 takes. I think we all went in fully aware that it could very well end up being a disaster, but we would be able to just hit the delete button and it would never see the light of day. Once it ended up being pretty good, we were so stoked on it for sure. I think you see how truly stoked we are at the end of the video, that is such an honest capture of our excitement.

Are there any tricks or stories with making the video we should know about?
Josh: Well, something that most people don't notice is that while the camera is on us in the lobby with the harp and piano (near the end) the rest of The Chariot is having to run out the back of the studio, then jump in a car and floor it around to the front so they can all be there, holding balloons by the time we walk out. Well, during one of the walk-throughs before we actually started rolling the camera, the band did just that, but they forgot John Goldman (Matt Goldman's kid that was dressed up like a bottle of mustard playing the DS). So we finished the walk through and all clapped and thought we did a decent job and then Goldman just asked where his kid was, when we all made it back into the studio we just found him still playing the DS, he didn't even care/notice that we had all left. One of the tricks that we pulled off that was pretty fun is we actually played a part near the end of the song double the speed that it was supposed to be, because we knew that in post-production of the video we were going to slow that part down to replicate the lower tuning that happens on the record. So it felt odd actually playing it so fast, but at the end of the day it ended being really neat for us. The video is actually riddled with tricks/stories, but I can't really think of them all right now.

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RANDY ALCORN IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE WRITERS. I FIRST LATCHED ONTO HIS SKILLS WITH THE BALANCED AND BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO SOME REAL HOT-BUTTONS IN OUR CULTURE IN THE BOOK *CHRISTIANS IN THE WAKE OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION*. A FEW YEARS LATER I WAS GIVEN HIS NOVEL *DEADLINE*, WHICH RESONATED WITH ME AND MY JOB AS A JOURNALIST. EACH OF HIS BOOKS I'VE READ SINCE THEN HAVE USUALLY HAD ONE THING IN COMMON – A KEEN EYE ON THE ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE, WHICH IS THE NAME OF HIS MINISTRY HE RUNS IN THE PORTLAND, OR AREA.

Never one to shy away from controversial and sticky topics, some of his latest works involve pain and suffering, which among other things made sitting down and interviewing him quite interesting. In 2009 he released a book called *If God is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil*. He is now releasing a follow-up called 90 *Days of God's Goodness* as well as a story called *The Chasm*. When delving into the centuries-old dilemma of evil, he suggested a unique experiment for our readers:

"Sit down and write a list of the worst things that have ever happened to you and the best things that have ever happened to you…

"When you do that you'll be stunned at the things that among the worst things that ever happened to you are actually also on the list of the best things that ever happened … in the sense that, 'How many of the best things that ever happened to me are the direct or indirect result of the worst things? So, for somebody who had a horrific thing that they experienced that was the worst thing and through that thing they came to Christ. A job that they lost and a false accusation was made against them that they had been stealing and it wasn't true. They lost that. It was *profoundly* disturbing and disappointing and all of that and now they do the work that they love. Had they had not lost their job, they wouldn't have ended up with the job they now had. And what about this crashed relationship that went so bad? It was one of the worst things that ever happened to them. Out of that they learned some things and now they are enjoying a relationship with someone that is on the best-things-that-ever-happened list. It goes on and on. It happens in my life. There are many things on the one list that came out of the other. What an encouragement that is, because it is God giving us just enough of a foretaste, then, of worst things that God has used for good to give us a basis for faith beyond the fact that we know Scripture is true. That's the ultimate basis for faith. It's even confirmable. We can even see in our lives a number of cases where worst things have been used for great good. And, if that's true of the ones we *can* see, what does that suggest about the ones where we can't see any good coming out of that? Who has lost a relationship that is treasured, who in the middle of losing that relationship or shortly after losing it is sitting there counting their blessings, saying, 'Hey, God is gonna use this for good…?' That isn't the way we normally think. But, in retrospect, in the long haul we can look back. Well, eternity is the ultimate long haul. It's the ultimate retrospect. We'll be in the presence of God and we'll be able to look back and say, 'Yeah. Yes! It was true all along. What God promised was true. I'm glad I did believe it' or 'I wish I would've believed it more.'"

That profound discourse simply came as a result of asking him about remedies to getting past being angry at God.

Some authors or artists are just a good interview. They're experienced, they know what they want to say and they're ready to spill. I asked him about his inspiration behind writing about Heaven and the afterlife so much and he ended up telling me about the subversive nature of fiction and how it allows a reader to approach a sensitive subject with an open mind ("…because their guard is down…"). I asked him if he thought music held any special properties and he latched onto the similarities between the novelist/storyteller and the songwriter. "Music has a way to tap into the emotions to move you – to move you profoundly even when you don't know why. In that sense, music and fiction are quite similar and both art forms." Certainly the word "thoughtful" could be used to describe Alcorn.

After the interview was over and I turned the tape recorder off, I asked him if he'd recommend any agents for an aspiring author. Turns out that he's been agent-less for the vast majority of his writing career. He was led some 20 years ago to give away 100% of the royalties from his books. "By God's grace," he shares, "that's been about $5,000,000 in royalties. No agent had come along and volunteered to give away his 15%." Not sure about you, but excellent writing aside, this fact alone makes me want to keep reading the guy's work.

✖

INTERVIEW BY DOUG VAN PELT

IT'S HARD TO KEEP A SECRET – ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT SECRET IS GREAT NEW MUSIC THAT YOU ARE CREATING WITH A FRIEND. BUT THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT JESSE LEACH (SEEMLESS, THE EMPIRE SHALL FALL) AND ADAM DUTKIEWICZ (KILLSWITCH ENGAGE) WERE DOING WHILE PUTTING TOGETHER WHAT IS NOW THE DEBUT ALBUM FOR THEIR NEW PROJECT, TIMES OF GRACE.

Both Leach and Dutkiewicz were in other bands while the creation of this album was slowly taking shape. "I'd be listening to the CD that Adam sent me on my headphones, while on tour with Seemless, writing the lyrics," Leach remembers. "The guys would ask me what I was doing and I'd have to be really vague about it. We had a very punk rock attitude about me making a name for myself out of the umbrella of Killswitch. I didn't want them to know I was considering anything with Adam. We were all pretty close, touring in a van together, so it was awkward [not telling them]."

Dutkiewicz concurs from the context of his own, touring band: "I didn't want anybody in Killswitch Engage to think I was going to be jumping ship. I'm not leaving the band. This is just something Jesse and I are doing because we are the best of friends and we love making music together."

For those that didn't know or forgot, Leach was the original vocalist for Killswitch Engage (heard on the 2000 self-titled debut and *Alive or Just Breathing*, circa '02). After departing KsE the two remained close friends. Ironically, it was suffering that brought them back into a working relationship. Leach was in the throes of unspecified dark times, while Dutkiewicz was on his back recovering from a back surgery that he thought might take him out of his music career forever. The end result is a startlingly heavy album aptly titled *The Hymn of a Broken Man*.

"I honestly feel it's the work of my career. I couldn't be more proud of it. It's sort of my new calling in life. I really feel strongly about getting out there and playing the songs in front of people.

"Adam was on his back in a hospital in London, wondering whether or not he was ever going to walk again or if his career was over as a performing musician. That put him in a pretty dark place, but through that darkness he was able to create this record. He did a lot of it in his head, believe it or not, while he was still incapacitated in the hospital bed. I got the phone call shortly thereafter and he told me, 'I've got a record for ya. I couldn't think of anyone else I'd rather have sing on it than you.' He basically told me that this was probably the most personal record he's ever written and he wanted to collaborate on it. I accepted. I was on the road with my band at the time, Seemless. We kept it under wraps. I was listening to it on my CD Walkman that I had to get so I could listen to it. And I started writing the stuff right on the tour. It started out with 'Strength in Numbers.' It was the first song I wrote for it. It's a call to arms song.

"I got off tour and my life took a huge nosedive. I went into the darkest place I've been in my entire life. That was really the catalyst for this record. The topic that we sort of touched upon – between Adam's struggle and mine. That's how this record was born. It was born out of pain and suffering, but I think we managed to keep the rays of life, hope, in the record. My hope is that people will be able to relate to it on that level, where it is about pain and suffering, but at the same time, we never lost our hope. We found our way out of the dark place. It really captures a moment in time. I'm very proud of it."

In addition to being very proud of this new album, Leach is very quick to convey the pride he feels towards his mate. Adam D, as he's often referred to (possibly out of difficulty in pronouncing his last name), is quite possibly the single producer most responsible for the New Wave of American Heavy Metal. He's certainly been part of some vital albums on the musical landscape this side of the Atlantic (Norma Jean, The Agony Scene, He Is Legend, Underoath, As I Lay Dying, The Devil Wears Prada, Mychildren Mybride, Austrian Death Machine, Shadows Fall, Unearth, Every Time I Die, All That Remains, A Day to Remember, The Acacia Strain).

Leach describes the first time he heard the demos that later became *The Hymn of a Broken Man*: "When I first heard this thing, I was in a van touring around the country. It was quiet enough in the van just to look out at the scenery, driving through the mountains and the woods and hearing this music. It totally floored me. It excited me. It moved me. Adam … he's got a gift. If you really look at what he's done, you realize how widespread his influence is. It's not just the Killswitch stuff, it's what he produces and the way he produces. He very much has a creative say on some of the stuff he works with. I think it's feasible to say he's responsible for modern American metal – how it is now. He's done so many bands, it's just obvious how big of an influence he is to a lot of writers. For me … and I'm a friend of his! Don't get me wrong. We're good friends. We're buddies, but I'm so proud of him. When I first heard this, I was like, 'Wow! I can't believe I'm going to be able to sing on this!' It just totally floored me. The demos to what you've heard have come a long way. He remixed the record seven or eight times. He re-amped the guitar sounds. He's a perfectionist. You're hearing the end result, but mark my words, the first time I heard it, it sounded great to me and I didn't really see anything wrong with it, but he's a perfectionist," he laughs.

When Leach explains that he's in the "the best place I've ever been and the strongest place I've ever been in my life," it rings true in his speech and attitude during even a brief conversation. You can sense that he's grounded. "I really feel like I'm already successful, because of the freedom (we had in) collaborating, regardless of what it does in the retail world and how 'successful' we are financially with it. I feel like I did my job. I did what I was called to do. I'm just looking forward to seeing how it impacts people. Hopefully, it'll touch people. For Adam and I both, when we started doing this record, there was no discussion of forming a band, touring, being successful, making money off it. None of that was ever discussed. If people just listen to this record and see that this album was created to help us and to help other people, that's the spirit of this record. I couldn't be more proud of that. I just hope people are able to take something away from it and I hope it touches them and helps them realize that there is always hope. There is always someone or something there to help you. My foundation is God and I hope people see that and walk away with something."

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Read more of our interview with Jesse Leach at hmmag.com [Photo: Jason Zucco]

BY DOUG VAN PELT

MOST BANDS WILL ADMIT LATER IN LIFE THAT THEY TOOK A COUPLE ALBUMS TO FULLY FIND THEIR SOUND. DETROIT DEATH METAL QUINTET AS THEY SLEEP, HOWEVER, COULDN'T BE HAPPIER WITH THEIR SOLID STATE RECORDS DEBUT *DYNASTY* SERVING AS THEIR INTRODUCTION TO THE WIDER WORLD.

Dynasty is far from the beginning, though. Following a lengthy writing and recording period, they released their first full-length, *Blacken the Sun*, through Luxor Records in 2008.

"We had the luxury of being able to write that album literally over the course of five years before we put it out," vocalist Aaron Bridgewater says. "We went through a couple lineup changes way back and we sifted out the bad songs and started hanging on to the ones we liked, so you're going to hear a lot of diversity on *Blacken the Sun*. There's songs on there written five years prior and then there's songs written the year of production, but they were all revisited, re-recorded and put together for the record."

It is that variance in sound on their debut that Bridgewater says makes *Dynasty* a better 101 course into As They Sleep. "I think the reason we're stoked about this album being the one that's going to obviously get bigger much faster is because you can hear the maturity fluctuation on *Blacken the Sun*," he says. "I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it – I'm still proud of it – but when you listen to *Dynasty*, which we were able to write and record consistently song-to-song in a year, year and a half's time, you can literally hear the maturity in the music when listening to *Dynasty* compared to *Blacken the Sun*.

"Honestly, I didn't really care which record got big first. I think people are really gonna be happy with the first record once they realize we have a first record. They'll still hear the same band on both records, it's just I think every band matures with every album they put out and we're proud that *Dynasty* is gonna have that consistency in the maturity of the music throughout."

Solid State picked them up following *Blacken*, though it was another soon-to-be labelmate, Gwen Stacy, that the label representative was there to see at a show in Lake Orion, MI. As They Sleep impressed, followed up with a press kit and happily signed a deal. Bridgewater extols the virtues of having a strong label backing over operating essentially DIY.

"It's just night and day," he says. "I got friends in California and Arizona calling me talking about how they just went and bought the album at their local record store. There's ads for our new record in *Revolver* magazine and magazines we read as kids growing up. We just shot a music video, not to mention all the money they sank into us to produce this new record. It's really helpful, because, let's be honest, we're artists and we don't have enough money to pay for all that stuff."

The resulting album started with a single concept and grew from there. "I came up with this idea to try and cover the fall of Rome," Bridgewater says. "I figured we could spawn off of that into a handful of significant empires and dynasties throughout history and also intertwine the reasons for their collapse with modern-day situations because most of these ancient empires that fell, the economy is usually one of the first things to go, and everybody knows the economy sucks here now. ['To the Republic'] revolves around present-day United States. We're seeing a lot of similarities between what's happening now with the USA and a lot of things that have happened in the past with other empires. Not to say that we're on the brink of collapse, but people need to open up their eyes. We decided to throw some mythology in there because Greek mythology is pretty present in a lot of the ancient kingdoms."

The music on *Dynasty* came from a long-standing love of death metal paired with a desire to fill a perceived hole in the market. "Cannibal Corpse and Suffocation were two of my favorite bands when I was a kid," Bridgewater says. "The only thing that ever got to me when I listened to a lot of death metal was it just kind of seemed a little bit monotonous. It kind of seemed like I would listen to a death metal record front to back and almost every song on it sounded the same. So we wanted to make sure those things that bored us on other death metal albums – and I'm not specifying what albums, I'm just saying things that bored us on those records we want to make sure we don't do that and that's why we ended up going with a more melodic sound to the death metal. We tried to write an entire record with songs we'd personally enjoy."

Their style of contrasting heavy riffs with bright, lyrical guitar solos comes from their process of crafting an album, which is aided by the fact guitarist Nick Morris has a degree in studio engineering. "Everything starts out with a riff," Bridgewater says. "The guitar players collaborate and sketch out a little outline, then we add a kind of a skeletal drum beat to it and some skeleton guitars and then I'll write lyrics and get the vocals going. That's basically pre-production, then we go into the studio and re-record everything together. It's a long, grueling process. Having a studio engineer in the band is definitely a great luxury to have and we have not had that from the beginning."

If it's difficult to glean a specific meaning from Bridgewater's lyrics – other than because of his meandering, dynamic screaming and the lack of singing, which they considered including on one song but scrapped – it's because he prefers to pen open-ended lyrics. "It's pretty obvious what I'm talking about here and there, but there's parts where I like to

leave it vague," he says. "If someone were to ask me 'What does this lyric mean?' I would say 'Well, how do you interpret it?' Then if they gave me an explanation I'd say 'That's great. That's how I wanted it to be.'"

Dynasty's cover art is just as cryptic as its lyrics, though they both tie into the overall concept. "The cover is kind of what you want to make of it," Bridgewater says. "It's about kings and dynasties and stuff like that, but there's just a decrepit old man on the cover and he's got a crown of sticks and it looks like he's either a king of his own personal little empire or maybe he's just some sort of a hoarder – there's all sort of relics around him whether they're significant to what he's done or who he is, is just up for speculation. I think it's a really sweet-looking cover that kind of shows the concept of the record and leaves it open for speculation. In the end, everyone has things and things are really insignificant in life if you look at it – maybe he's a hoarder, you know what I mean?"

Another thing the band prefers to leave to interpretation is any potential classification based on their beliefs. "We do get the 'Are you a Christian band?' question a lot, I think mainly because we're on Solid State," Bridgewater says. "I have Christian roots from my childhood and I carry it with me today and I'm sure some people that read the lyrics would say it kind of reflects in the music. As far as individual beliefs, some of us have

BY COREY ERB

more Christian roots than others of us. Faith does play a part in what we're doing, but we're still a death metal band and we want to deliver death metal the way it's supposed to be. We don't have anything satanic in our music. There's no profanity in the music, either. We could go on tour with Deicide and get along with those guys just as much as we'd go on tour with Demon Hunter and get along with those guys. There's really no reason why you shouldn't get along just because your lyrical content or beliefs might be different than somebody else's. If that was the case, 90 percent of death metal wouldn't get along with anybody 'cause there's a lot of satanic stuff going on out there.

"I think people who have Christian faith can listen to us and take something from it. And I think people who are secular fans and take us as a secular band can take something from it. I don't want to be pigeonholed. If people want to consider us a Christian band, that's great. If they want to consider us secular, that's great. I know what the lyrics say and I know what I believe so it really doesn't matter to me."

One thing that does matter to water is what genre they're lumped into. "The one thing I can't stand when people call us is deathcore," he says. "We might have one small breakdown on the new record that maybe somebody could call some sort of a '-core' breakdown, but we are not deathcore. I'd call it melodic death if I had my pick because a lot of the guitar work in there tends to be a little more colorful and brighter. It's accompanied by a lot of heavy guitar picking but everybody likes to hear a nice, sweet-sounding riff that is nothing but ear candy."

ics have to say. "You can't please everybody," Bridgewater says. "We've been blessed with amazing reviews so far but you always get the little biased metal kid sitting behind their computer that tries to take a shot at you on some forum or thread. It's so obnoxious. Those are the kids that live on Lambgoat and think if you're not some grindcore band named, like, Face Mutilation you shouldn't get any recognition." (laughs)

Ultimately, it's their view of themselves that drives As They Sleep, and they believe *Dynasty* is worthy of the publicity of being their first widely available release, even if they weren't always sure about every decision in the recording process.

"We did have plans to have a little bit of clean-tone melodic singing vocals on one of the songs," Bridgewater says. "I've never been a huge fan of that. I like it when other people do it sometimes and we do have a little bit of it on

our first record and I'm not saying that even though I might not be a fan of it that other people wouldn't be, so I guess one thing maybe we could have done was include those clean-tone vocals on the new record, which we did not, and maybe a little bit broader spectrum of people might have liked that. I guess if there was any sort of 'We should have done this different' that would have been it.

"As far as what I would consider the legacy of the album is, the drumming I think is really amazing. It's nice, clean, on point, over the top. I'm really proud of the vocal work I did on it and I think the guitar work speaks for itself, too. We all came together and did something really tight and we're happy with it and that would be the legacy of the record, so to speak."

✖

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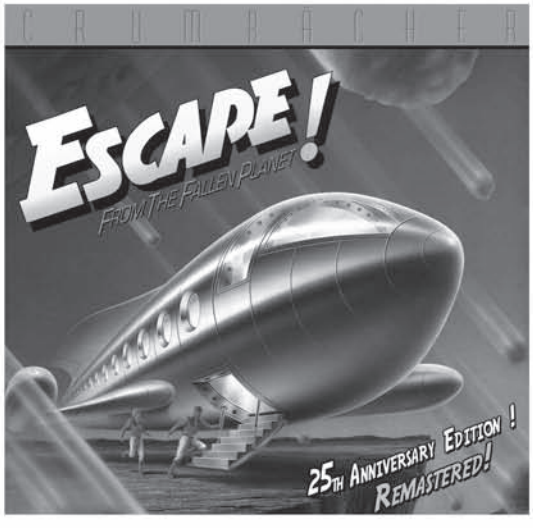

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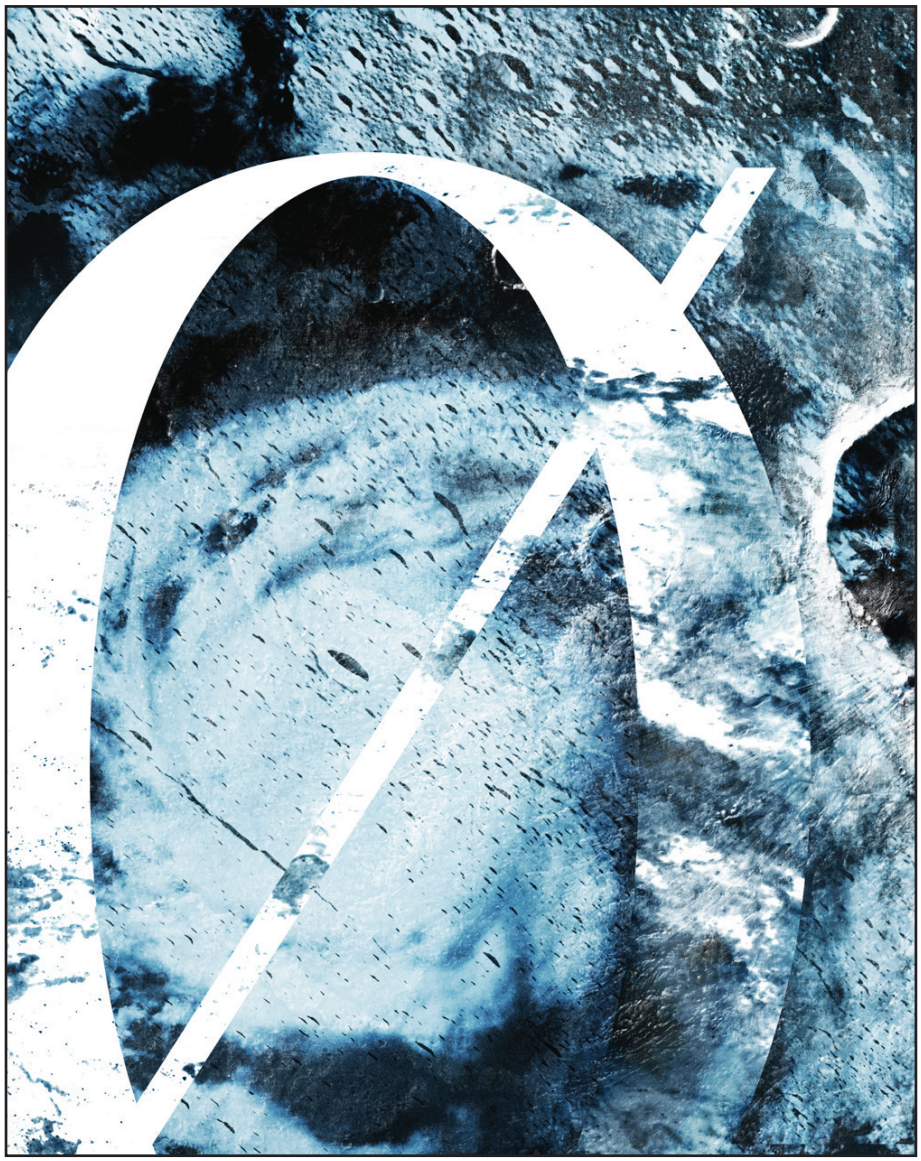


UNDEROATH
Ø (DISAMBIGUATION)

First of all, I'd like to say that I love that Daniel Davidson looks like a walrus.

Underoath kept me alive for a while. Well, I suppose God kept me alive, but he certainly used Underoath's *Define The Great Line* to help me out. I have the lyrics "End Cycle; Press On" tattooed on my forearm (from their song "To Whom It May Concern"). I don't know how stupid a bunch of people might think this is, considering I'm writing an album review, but generally, I look at lyrics first, because lyrics make it or break it. With *Ø Disambiguation*, I couldn't connect. I still don't think that I can, although the depravity (or overall meaninglessness that I think I equate a lot of the subject matter with) can be relatable. But Spencer's lyrics used to give me so much hope, and I while I can connect to the feelings of hopelessness expressed in the record, I'm more sad about it than I am inspired to sing. All the songs about drowning and swallowing water and sinking and great abysses just make me feel empty or confused (or absolutely nothing at all). Although the other albums held many of the same ideas, they concluded with hope, which Disambiguation doesn't. However, the song "Who Will Guard The Guardians" arouse an intensity in me ("I swear it's worth saving us… Revolt! We stood by defeat for so long!"), as well as the line, "Where is my fix!?" on Illuminator. That's intense.

Musically, it would be shameful to ignore this album. The writing is certainly characteristic of a less-pop-influenced freedom (goodbye Aaron) and flows better than any album has previously. It flows like water. I swear Underoath is the only band that progressively gets heavier and weirder, and more popular, all at once. While every other band is getting more mainstream, Underoath is getting whacked out of their minds and making songs like "Driftwood" – where Thom Yorke may as well have recorded the thing and snuck it into the final production - and marketing it to genre they created. It's phenomenal. The album feels like a natural progression and an entirely different band all at the same time. They've always amazed me by their ability to blend heavy music with drum patterns that could be played in jazz bars and stupid time signatures (2/3 over 2/4 over something else and something else and something else)… ~~[TOOTH & NAIL]~~ LEVI MACALLISTER

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

YOUR MEMORIAL
ATONEMENT

Facedown's newest band Your Memorial hits the scene this year with their second full-length album, *Atonement*. The band brings solid hard riffing, blast beats, and deep vocals with a powerful message of hope anyone can relate to. The breakdowns are going to get that dancer out in the pit picking up that change and swinging his arms, but that's not all that it takes to be brutal! *Atonement* has a heavy sound, but it's a sound that has been heard throughout the scene. Also, with being a four-piece band, the music lacks the sound you would get with a five or six piece. Your Memorial is a band perfect for a kid who is new to the scene and looking for an introduction to the basic hardcore. So if you're new to the scene, this is a great band to start with. But if you've been in the scene for years and looking for something new, this album is not your cup of tea. [FACEDOWN] NICK COTRUFO

MESSENGERS
ANTHEMS

While it was the year 2010, Strike First Records' newest band Messengers brings you back to the glory days of thrash metal of the 80's and 90's. They call themselves hardcore, but they lack the "core" element. Messengers is more of a metal band. Their sound relates more with bands like Pantera and Agnostic Front. The vocals are powerful and understandable, but the lyrics themselves fall short. They are reminiscent of an 80's action film such as *The Terminator* or *The Punisher*. The music doesn't change up very much during the seven-track album, which makes it kind of boring and repetitive. However, they have many guitar riffs that will make you headbang and windmill your hair uncontrollably. So grow out your hair and put on that leather jacket, you are going to a metal show! If you're looking for metalcore look elsewhere, but if you love old thrash metal this band is for you! [STRIKE FIRST] MATTHEW LEONARD

MEMPHIS MAY FIRE
BEYOND BROKEN

The momentum enjoyed by Memphis May Fire via their *Saw VI* inclusion and press from every major hard rock press outlet should only continue with their five-song EP, *Between The Lies*. Their debut, *Sleepwalking*, led to headlining tours and the aforementioned placements, yet it's this cohesive pack of songs that positions the group well for 2011. The dueling metalcore riffs of longtime members Ryan Bentley and Kellen McGregor pulse with an intensity and urgency few bands can achieve, especially on "Be Careful What You Wish For." Lead single "Action/Adventure" polishes the edge just a bit, but still retains the dynamism and energy. Yet it's Matt Mullins vocal work on "Deuces Las Cruces" that creates the album's pinnacle – a moment of maturity and growth that best exhibits the band's front man alongside another round of impressive guitar work. [BULLETTOOTH] MATT CONNER

I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA
THE ROAR AND THE WHISPER

The Roar And The Whisper leaves me spinning. Stumped. Just when I think I have something conclusive to applaud or critique, the track flip-flops. Heck, the genre changes. Exemplifying IAAAO's attitude of worship, the opening track sets the album on course in the style of a sort of repetitive, intercessory pleading – a precursor to the rest of the prayer: "We pray Your presence come down!" From there on out, the four-piece defines "roar" (gravel-throated outbursts, up-tempo, post-breakdown, chunky, hardcore influenced drive), "whisper" (progressive/ambient-instrumental beauties interlaced with vocal harmonies, acoustic accompaniment, clean vocal tracks), and just straight weird (experimental/digital tracks either drive or appear on multiple songs throughout, screams overlay bluesy tap-pick guitar-work on "Wolves," what sound like bells make their way into sub-drops). But it works! Strange enough to raise questions, but cohesive enough to conclude: wholly, it's an exciting confusion. [COME&LIVE!] LEVI MACALLISTER

AS THEY SLEEP
DYNASTY

Dynasty is not just a bad nighttime soap opera from the past; *Dynasty* is also the name of As They Sleep's excellent new CD. This concept album touches upon many notable human dynasties throughout history – and not just the good ones. For instance, both "The Third Reich" and "Attila" (as in Attila the Hun) speak to absolute power that corrupts absolutely. Sonically, As They Sleep also references a few significant musical dynasties. Guitarists Nick Morris and Barry Gomez provide the sort of power riffs that would make Judas Priest and Iron Maiden proud, yet vocalist Aaron Bridgewater bellows throughout – appropriately enough – with a cruel dictator's howl. Bridgewater also shows off his flexible pipes with a few AC/DC-worthy scream-y squeals during "Attila." Drummer Tony Lukitsh may well be As They Sleep's MVP, as his rapid fire stick work is simply tireless. Might this be the metal that dynasties are made of? [SOLID STATE] DAN MACINTOSH

RED JUMPSUIT APPARATUS
THE HELL OR HIGH WATER EP

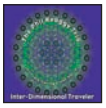
This Florida band mostly flies under the radar of Christian rock fans, since they signed to a major label, play in mainstream venues and use the ocassional profane word (like the popular word for dung in "Cast the First Stone"). Having left Virgin Records, they've gone DIY and self-released this 5-song EP. Musically it balances the urgency of its debut album (with singing guitars and speedy tempo) and uses only some of the room they created for themselves when they stretched out on 2009's *Lonely Road* album. The band used some of its own money (one assumes) to make 3 videos from this release, which will precede a full-length due out later this year. The EP closes with "Will You Stand," a powerful tribute to the US military, which is cool to see and hear. [THE COLLECTIVE] DOUG VAN PELT

VENIA
I'VE LOST ALL FAITH IN MYSELF

Put on your favorite band shirt, tie up those Nikes and wear your finest camouflage designed shorts. It's time to mosh for Minneapolis's Venia. Their second release, *I've Lost All Faith In Myself*, brings a good mixture of old school Madball with the heavy tones of Terror. Every song doesn't come off as repetitive in structure nor does Venia seem like they are trying too hard. Basically it's mean hardcore without the nasty attitude. What is most enjoyable about this 4 song EP is that every style of hardcore seems to be used with rapid circle pit drumming and open-and-first guitar chords. On the last song "The Call", front man Chad Urich co-wrote and does dual vocals with Jason Berggrren, original vocalist of Strongarm. If you're a fan of solid hardcore with a "tough guy" edge, pick it up either on a limited edition 7" vinyl or by MP3 digital download offered from the label. [BLOOD & INK] DANIEL GARCIA

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Underoath *Ø (Disambiguation)*	04	03*
Your Memorial *Atonement*	03*	03
Messengers *Anthems*	04	02
Memphis May Fire *Beyond Broken*	04	03
I Am Alpha And Omega *The Roar and the Whisper*	04	04
As They Sleep *Dynasty*	04	03*
Red Jumpsuit Apparatus *The Hell Or High Water EP*	03*	
Venia *I've Lost All Faith in Myself*	03*	03*
The Phil Keaggy Trio *Inter-Dimensional Traveler*	03	03*
Overcome *The Great Campaign of Sabotage*	04	05
Affiance *No Secret Revealed*	04	03*
The Famine *Architects of Guilt*	04	04
Arthur *Watch the Years Crawl By*	03*	
Dustin Kensrue *This Good Night is Still Everywhere*	04	04
Ben + Vesper *Honors*	03	03
Pomegranates *One Of Us*	04	04



THE PHIL KEAGGY TRIO

INTER-DIMENSIONAL TRAVELER

Do you remember that "Plays well with others" line item on your childhood report cards? Well, this altruistic principle also holds true when evaluating musicians. Take The Phil Keaggy Trio, for instance. Keaggy, along with former Glass Harp drummer John Sferra, and keyboardist Jack Giering, make some wonderful music together on *Inter-Dimensional Traveler*. Their collaborative styles range from the upbeat blues of "New Day," to the pretty vibe of "Our Girls," to what sounds like an homage to old Steely Dan via "Crank It Up." People love to put great guitarists, like Keaggy, up on pedestals – almost as though they are islands unto themselves. But it's the interplay among these three seasoned players – particularly the musical conversations that take place between Keaggy's guitar and Giering's organ – that make this new instrumental disc such a joy to behold. [STROBIE] DAN MACINTOSH

AFFIANCE

NO SECRET REVEALED

Not often does a band release an album that is full of variety and solid as a rock, and yet Cleveland Ohio based band Affiance have done so with *No Secret Revealed*, their debut album from Bullet Tooth Records. Combining technical guitars, precise drumming, soaring clean vocals, and some growls, Affiance raises the bar for young bands. Variety is something that is very abundant on this album. Songs feature such things as tapping riffs ("For Power"), gang vocals ("Call to the Warrior"), and the guest keyboards of James Baney of The Devil Wears Prada ("Dissent!"). The melodic vocals are handled well, as are the occasional harsh vocals; the guitar work is impressive, with everything from breakdowns to tapping solos and riff after riff being unleashed. The rhythm section of the bass and drums is solid, though it really tends to just provide a base for the vocals and guitars to show their talent. Affiance is a band on the rise; look for them to explode in the future. [BULLETTOOTH] NICK HABISCH

DUSTIN KENSRUE

THIS GOOD NIGHT IS STILL EVERYWHERE

Dustin has hit the whole spectrum with this album. The album contains covers of bands like The Pogues and Canned Heat, traditional Christmas hymns and two originals. The album starts with an upbeat rendition of Darlene Love's "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)" then rolls right into "Christmas Blues," a slow bluesy song about missing a loved one on Christmas. "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" sounds like it's being sung in your living room as he sings along with his acoustic guitar and a tambourine in the background. "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is a standout. Slide guitar quietly hums in the background to make this song earily beautiful. But perhaps the real shining star on the album is his original song "This is War." You've never heard a Christmas song like this one before. It crashes in with distorted guitars and then quiets down for the verses while Dustin sings about God waging war on Satan by sending His Son to conquer him. The lyrics are incredible, and it may be the most profound Christmas song you've ever heard. [EQUAL VISION] TIM HARRIS

OVERCOME

THE GREAT CAMPAIGN OF SABOTAGE

Jason Stinson has had his ups and downs over the years with his creation called Overcome. Being one of the pioneers of the first Spirit-filled hardcore movement in the mid to late '90s and the first great Arizona metal band to pave the way. Overcome was the cornerstone of success for Facedown in the beginning of the label (after a couple of full-lengths on T&N). Overcome put out their last three releases on Facedown. Now after ten years we see the return of this iconic band. With some fresh blood and some old friends including Thomas Washington former bassist and vocalist of Indwelling now as front man. Overcome puts out the best release of their career. Along with Faceown's 100th release on the label. *The Great Campaign of Sabotage* is the perfect release to hold that title. With the perfect blend of Overcome and Indwelling musically and lyrically. It is like they never skipped a beat. This is Spirit-filled hardcore at its purest form. Thomas' vocals sound just like Jason's did. He brings back his amazing worshipful lyrics of our Creator in such songs as "Reverence Pt. 2" and "Profession." Jason brings his classic style of writing about issues within the church in "Seeker Sensitive" and the fall-of-man kind in the title track "The Great Campaign of Sabotage" and, with a great redux of a Overcome classic, "Lifting of The Weak," There is no doubt in my mind that this record will be in the top five of many top metal list of the year. [FACEDOWN] ROB SHAMELESS

THE FAMINE

ARCHITECTS OF GUILT

The Famine is well known for their previous band Embodyment. So When Kris McCaddon left The Famine some of us wondered if history was going to repeat itself. To my surprise it did not. Nick Nowell's vocals are brutal and somewhat "evil" sounding. What would you expect from a band from Arlington, Texas? The home of some of the best metal to ever grace our ears. This is Texas metal at its finest. If it ain't got a blast beat I am not tapping my feet. This record has elements of chaos, sludge, trash and leads that you would think Darrel Abbott would have written it if he was still alive. This record has very little breakdowns, and I love it. If there is one, it is not the same breakdown we have heard over the past few years. It is very heavy and dirty, yet original. The Famine differently overcomes the challenge of writing a sophomore record that is as good or even better the the first. Along with having a different vocalist. I believe *Architects of Guilt* is yet another record this year that helps set the bar for what a metal record should sound like. [SOLID STATE] ROB SHAMELESS

ARTHUR

WATCH THE YEARS CRAWL BY

Saying goodbye to MxPx is hard. Having the slightly slower rock of Arthur really helps get past the void Bremerton's trio has left, though. More melancholy in nature, the tunes focus in on boy-girl relationships a lot, retaining the endearing sentiments of "Middlename". There are the ocassional poignant questions, like, "Whose will has been done?" ("Be Still"), but by and large it's all quite a fantastic and fun time. Think Weezer or those highly-successful ballads by Green Day. [ROCK CITY] DOUG VAN PELT

BEN + VESPER

HONORS

Honors, the latest album from husband and wife indie duo Ben + Vesper, is both very good and disappointing at the exact same time. Stylistically, the album is a candy store of quirky melodies and clashing instruments. At times they sound a bit like the lighter side of Minus the Bear, at others they resemble a more melancholy She & Him. Both Ben and Vesper have great voices, which they use generously throughout every song. With all this (and guest appearances from Sufjan Stevens on piano), *Honors* never feels very focused. Great ideas, both musically and especially lyrically never seem to be fully thought through, leaving the listener with fragments of a great song, but never the satisfaction of a fully developed one. There is a lot to love about Ben + Vesper with *Honors*, but what could have been interesting becomes only whimsical by the end of the album. [SOUNDS FAMILYRE] IAN HARVEY

POMEGRANATES

ONE OF US

Few Midwestern bands are enjoying the buzz accompanying Cincinnati's favorite indie popsters, Pomegranates. Praised by KEXP, *Spin* and *The New York Times*, the quartet has taken their act to Afternoon Records. It's clear their reverb-drenched psych pop has matured over a few years now and their third LP, *One of Us*, is a sheer aural delight to take in. "50's" presents a souped-up Beach House sound, complete with foggy guitar work and an over-the-top falsetto of Joey Cook that works to perfection. "Skull Cakin'" ventures into The Walkmen's territory with a lo-fi straightforward delivery and crashing drum work. The bouncing bass and ethereal guitar work on the title track meld into an ideal, blissful pop amalgam. You'll find echoes of several bands inside every single Pomegranates creation, but the total sum becomes something else entirely. Cincinnati should be so proud. [AFTERNOON] MATT CONNER

SHOWBREAD
WHO CAN KNOW IT?

Built on the "Raw Rock Kills" anthem, Showbread has constantly maneuvered through their own brand of eclectic, sometimes macabre, but always interesting, rock and roll. With their Come&Live debut, Showbread steps away from both the "raw" and "rock" elements of their prior releases and lean towards the ballads that once sprinkled through their earlier work. Vocalist and primary creative force, Josh Dies sticks to a lower baritone for 95% of the album, and most of the tracks on *Who Can Know It?* seem oddly familiar. As expected, Dies does an astounding lyrical duty, weaving his verse and intriguing metaphors into plenty of great lines, specifically "You're Like A Taxi." The tune "Dear Music" may bring the entire album into context as he expresses his frustration with the state of the scene, "If I could turn my back on anything I'd choose it to be you." Maybe they're growing up, maybe it's a first attempt at working as a four-piece, maybe Dies just got tired of being lumped in with every screamo frontman to cross the scene since 2002, but ultimately, the combination of flat instrumentation and uneventful melodies is a mild disappointment. ~~[COME&LIVE!] NATHAN DOYLE~~

THE CHOIR
DE-PLUMED

This de-plumed album takes one song from each of The Choir's 12 studio albums, and reconfigures them as acoustic tracks. The fact that all these songs work so well, enthusiastically testifies to the band's excellent songwriting. Songwriters often say that they know a song is a good one when it can simply be played on an acoustic guitar alone. And while there's more than just mere acoustic guitar here – Matt Slocum also adds cello coloring, along with Steve Hindalong's perfectly pinpointed percussion – these songs are significantly different from their original versions. In fact, the gentler take on "A Sentimental Song" may even be better than its first appearance on *Circle Slide*, which is almost like saying a re-do of the Mona Lisa is an improvement! "Dreams" (from *Voices in Shadows*) and 15 Doors (off *Shades of Gray*) are also much better now, as they were originally recorded before The Choir truly found its voice. ~~[GALAXY 21] DAN MACINTOSH~~

VARIOUS ARTISTS
PUNK GOES POP 3

This series of albums always churns out some gems and some forgettable numbers. This one's no different. Fun and goofiness are the key elements in each cover. Family Force 5's cover of "Bulletproof" has its moments of high energy, but kinda chugs along in the slower times. The autotuned last chorus is a hoot, as is Artist vs. Poet's cover of Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance." ~~[FEARLESS] DOUG VAN PELT~~

HAWK NELSON
CRAZY LOVE

Eschewing the playful edge for a more frontal rock assault, *Crazy Love* carries Hawk Nelson to a more experimental, serious level. The good news is that the results are all the stronger for the move. Ian Eskelin mans the production on the band's fifth proper full-length and the electronic leanings throughout prove his hand was heavy through the recording. The title track creates a slower dance punk canvas upon which to extol the extravagant love of God. A searing guitar solo in the song's mid-section keeps it from moving too far away from HN's wheelhouse, yet the electronic edge works wonders here. "Skeleton" ramps up the punk energy and hearkens back to the band's debut, *Letters To The President*. These songs are representative of the overall balance the band achieves between the past and future. Everything else falls somewhere in between, with "Your Love is a Mystery" sounding a bit Switchfoot-esque and "One Shot" providing a straightforward sound akin to *Live Life Loud*. The scope of *Crazy Love* gives Jason Dunn and company some fun brushes to paint with and the energy comes through loud and clear. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] MATT CONNER~~

RED
UNTIL WE HAVE FACES

Red knows how to throw down the rock. Having perfected the metallic guitar tones the chugga-chug along with well-orchestrated keyboards and shared stages with Breaking Benjamin, Three Days Grace, Papa Roach, Chevelle, they'll get lots of bodies moving with Until We Have Faces. It's an interesting title choice, hearkening back to a C.S. Lewis classic, which reveals the cerebral side of this industrial-rock influenced band. Red hasn't deviated from its core sound, which is definitely working for them and will have fans of *End of Silence* and *Innocence & Instinct* reveling in the familiar. It's not all the same, however, as a haunting choir of voices at the tail end of the opener, "Feed the Machine" and also some primal drumming in "Who We Are" will attest. A certain amount of respect is due Red by delivering another quality album that doesn't waste time exploring new territory. After all, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. ~~[ESSENTIAL] DOUG VAN PELT~~

A BULLET FOR PRETTY BOY
REVISION:REVISE

The hippies of yestergeneration discovered the therapeutic benefits of scream therapy, but they didn't have the benefit of good hardcore (even the melodic/screamo variety, like A Bullet For Pretty Boy). Too bad. They could've used chants like: "We won't bend / We won't break" (from the lead-off track, "The Deceiver," which segues to introspective lyrics like: "And look in the mirror / I don't recognize myself / Who is this deceiver," ending with a prayer: "Oh God / Take what is left of me."). ABFPB has all the ingredients for intense fun: excellent, tight drumming; killer guitars; high, clean vocals, growls and chant-along gang vocals. ~~[RAZOR & TIE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

DANIELSON
BEST OF GLOUCESTER COUNTY

Danielson has officially snuck up on us – delivering a rockin' romp of high energy, stompin' tunes. Gone are the major quirks of "Rubber-Necker" or "Pottymouth" and in are Neil Young-like Americana rock anthems ("Complimentary Dismemberment Insurance," and "You Sleep Good Now") and even some Beatlesque psychedelic moments ("Olympic Portions"). There's a mewithoutYou "Sweater Poorly Knit" style building crescendo that starts "Hovering Above That Hill" that's mesmerizing. The music moves under its own instrumentation without the need of visual aids. In other words, he ain't going to be performing the songs from this album in his tree. No, this album's tour will no doubt feature him in a hat to keep his curly bangs from dangling in front of his eyes and he'll be focused on the fretboard of his guitar as he concentrates on the power of the song. Anyone who's seen *Danielson: A Family Movie* and/or seen him live should've known he had this masterful command of music in him ... and *Gloucester County* is the proof. ~~[SOUNDS FAMILYRE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Showbread *Who Can Know It?*	03	03
The Choir *De-Plumed*	04	03*
Various Artists *Punk Goes Pop 3*	02*	
Hawk Nelson *Crazy Love*	03	04
Red *Until We Have Faces*	03*	
A Bullet For Pretty Boy *Revision:Revise*	04	
Danielson *Best of Gloucester County*	04	
Saint *Alive Forever*	02*	
King's X *Live Love in London*	04	
Tobymac *Moving Pictures*	04	
Rocky Loves Emily *American Dream EP*	03	
MUTEMATH *Armistice Live*	04*	
Darkwater *Where Stories End*	04	04
Jerusalem *She*	04	04
Eisley *The Valley*	04	

SAINT
ALIVE FOREVER

This DVD captures this British steel-strength pioneering Christian metal band in full gear. Starting off with a 2010 performance, original vocalist Josh Kramer and bassist Richard Lynch are tightly synced with guitarist Jerry Johnson and drummer Larry London. It's not exactly a reborn Judas Priest and the high notes and chord changes don't always get to the right places, but it's a decent slab of classic metal for a night in front of the tube. Missing is a track listing in the packaging, but added are multiple shows (shot from handhelds) – from Cornerstone 1986 to Tomfest 2005 – and a couple concept vids. The best part of the entire thing is the non-stop attacking energy Saints goes after it with, [RETROACTIVE] DOUG VAN PELT

KING'S X
LIVE LOVE IN LONDON

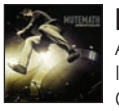
This two-CD/DVD live recording is something King's X should've done years ago. It's a crying shame that it might be too late for a sleeping public to awaken to this trio's unique greatness. Capturing the band in London, which was the first major city to embrace the band back in 1988, was a great choice, as the enthusiasm and energy seems to crossover the stage and envigorate the performers (who might be on the tail end of their career together?). Hits from the band's long and vast discography, including gems like "Moanjam," "Pleiades," "What Is This?" "Dogman," Visions" and the never-ending ending of "We Were Born To Be Loved." The standout moment is one of those magical moments that, had it happened if I were in the crowd I'd actually hate it (cuz I came to hear *the band* sing its best song, ya know?), but this performance of "Goldilox" showcases the audience in London on lead vocals ... and it's wonderful. [INSIDE OUT] DOUG VAN PELT

TOBYMAC
MOVING PICTURES

Remember when MTV used to show music videos? A lot of us used to sit in front of those CRT screens for hours hoping to get a glimpse of something good. It was always a joy when an artist would collect their concept/promo videos in a retail package for the fan. Tobymac's done that with these 13 proper vids. Some of 'em obviously had big budgets and have made the visual equal the energy of the audio. [FOREFRONT] DOUG VAN PELT

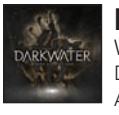
ROCKY LOVES EMILY
AMERICAN DREAM EP

Sugar is sweet and it'll rot your teeth if you don't show restraint and regulate your diet, but I'm not sure that goes for music consumption. Either way, Rocky Loves Emily are sure to earn the affections of many with this EP of five solid, immaculately-produced (thanks to Casey Bates) songs. Imagine if The Rocket Summer brushed the keyboards to a servant's role, dialed up the dirty-sounding guitars a few notches and added some nice gang vocals on the occasional chorus. "There's A Word For You" might be the hit that gets these guys known far beyond the borders of their home state of Michigan. [TOOTH & NAIL] DOUG VAN PELT



MUTEMATH
ARMISTICE LIVE

If this isn't the finest export from New Orleans, I'm not sure what is. Granted, some might fine coffee comes from the Big Easy, but this band offers more buzz and substance than the finest cup. While their *Flesh And Bones Electric Fun* DVD was/is a must-own piece of digital – foremost because it captured their unbelievable and amazing live show (circa '05 to '07) – this here DVD is another one of those must-shell-out-the-bucks-to-get items. The band is simply *that* captivating. While many of the same songs appear on both discs ("Control," "Typical," "Reset" and "Break The Same, complete with their own unique stage spin on deconstructionism), they flow so well in the *Armistice Tour* setting that their absence would be a detriment. Other key points on this double-disc are all the bonus concept videos on the DVD (if you haven't seen the "Typical" video yet ... you ain't seen nothin') and that you can enjoy the jams on your audio device of choice with the CD. This thing didn't get marketed much (at least to my set of eyes), so it's not exactly easy to find, but worth the search. [WARNER BROS.] DOUG VAN PELT

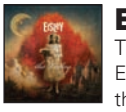


DARKWATER
WHERE STORIES END

Darkwater's latest release is a triumph. A progressive cavalcade of melodies and musical exploration, *Where Stories End* – from the rich opening notes of "Breathe"to the epic feel of "Into the Cold" – soars with conviction and passion; it's a natural progression from Darkwater's debut. The majority of material is delivered with authority and command while not neglecting subtly or nuances that enure the material to the listener. Prog fans should unite and make this album a top seller for 2010. A big thumbs up from here. [ULTERIUM] KEVEN CROTHERS

JERUSALEM
SHE

Throughout Jerusalem's 35-year history, Ulf Christiansson has rarely been speechless. The rock-and-roll stage is his pulpit and music-infused sermons are delivered with high-volume power chords from his Fender Stratocaster and the unbridled passion of his vocals. *She*, the Swedish band's first offering of all-new material after an astonishing 16 years, does justice to the group's legacy. The title, a synonym for Babylon, appropriately sets the stage for a selection of songs about repentance and freedom, with musical nods towards *Quadrophenia*-era Who, U2's *War* period, Pink Floyd's revelatory *The Wall* and Jerusalem's own *Warrior* and *Prophet* records. Intricate bass playing, monstrous drumming, and arena-filling guitars are prevalent, with Ulf's seasoned vocals riding over the top. Throughout the 13 well-produced songs, the band plays like an ensemble sequestered in a rehearsal space – a nice change amid the glossiness of the *ProTools* recording age. "Calling On," the album opener, starts things off with the type of testosterone-fueled energy that was all over *Live in the U.S.A: In His Majesty's Service*, Jerusalem's 1985 concert statement and asks the question, "What if it's true, you can be free?" "Crown the King," with its attractive, propulsive pop feel and consistent melody, sounds like something that would have appeared on Christiansson's sadly-overlooked 2003 solo record, *Entertainers and Soldiers*. "I Want to Leave Her, " perhaps *She*'s strongest cut, arrives with a marching drum pattern, melodic bass part, and arresting guitar tones all married to a memorable chorus and pleading vocals. "Heaven," the album's mellow moment, strikes a nice balance between gentle bass and guitar chords and features one of the finest vocal performances of Christiansson's career. 16 years is a long time to wait, and *She* pays a fitting tribute to one of Christian rock's longest-lasting groups – a band still possessing plenty of vitality and never apologetic for their evangelistic stance. As Christiansson sang in 1980's eight-minute-and two second opus, "Introduction," "There is not a meaning, there is not a hope, there is no reality and there is no life … without Jesus." Why would he apologize? [PIERCED] CHRIS CALLAWAY



EISLEY
THE VALLEY

Especially after the wonder found in the tune "A Sight to Behold" (from *Combinations*), it's sad to think of the sweet DuPree sisters (who make up 3/5's of Eisley) going through pain, despair and heartache ... but dang if the experience didn't help them produce a rich album of material. Tunes like "Smarter," "Watch It Die," "Sad" and "Ambulance" wrench some strong emotions with words and their beautiful voices. At times the bass guitar takes center stage for a tasty rhythm. If I had to guess, I'd think these songs were written inside Kurt Cobain's old cottage on a cold, rainy day. They're sadly depressing, but somehow bubbling with hope, comfort and resolution. [EQUAL VISION] DOUG VAN PELT

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Twenty-Sixth)

We've been exploring in this series answers as to why millions of Evangelical Americans have produced so few examples of quality art in any artistic category, seeing that this is largely due to limited (and/or distorted) views of Biblical teaching (or a failure to act on the implications of its teachings), despite the fact that Holy Writ instructs Christians in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), which works of necessity include the making of art.

We looked at the negative effects of such theologically deficient perspectives on the doctrines of Creation and Eschatology, which result in denigrations of the physical world and time as appropriate theaters of God's Purposes, encouraging pessimism concerning history, and viewing the world as Satan's realm which needs only to be escaped from, rather than redeemed and fulfilled.

We saw also that sub-Biblical views on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity led to a destruction of Scriptural justification of symbol as simultaneously showing forth both multiple meanings and unified meaning. Such views lead as well to the reduction of men from the mysterious bearers of God's Image to simplistic machines amenable to quick-fix formulae.

We then turned to look at the implications of the Incarnation of Christ, in which God, in the Second Person of the Trinity, joined Himself to a fully Human Nature and Body so that He could be the Perfect Sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind by dying in fallen humanity's place. This Eternal Joining of God to Man in Christ Jesus is summed up by the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) when it wrote that He is "at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood. Truly God and truly Man…"

We've seen how this aberrant view of the Incarnation can lead to devaluation of the fact of Christ's Growth and Human Development, which in turn discounts the valuation of regular human growth in time as unimportant to God's Purposes, so that men are seen in a deformed fashion.

The devaluation of Christ's Humanity is artistically destructive in other ways, as well. For instance, an improper view of the Lord Jesus' Emotions (intrinsic as they are to His Humanity) leads to an improper view of the value of human emotion, and thus to a deformed representation of men in worship and art.

The negative results of this same devaluation extend to the other Aspects of Jesus' Humanity, such as His Imagination, which, as a Human, He necessarily possessed, as do all human beings. Imagination is the aspect of human consciousness which allows us to envision things which are not physically present to us, to see ourselves in situations we're not currently in, to think analogically/metaphorically, and to connect disparate abstract elements. Modern Evangelicalism has been generally distrustful of the imagination, associating it with sensuality and an escape from reality, seeing it only as associated with fiction.

Yet the Lord Jesus utilized imagination constantly in Scripture. In John 10:9, Jesus called Himself "the Door," even though He was not literally a slab of wood, metal, or stone on hinges (but is the only Way for men to access God). In John 15:5, Jesus said that He was "the Vine," though He was not a plant (though He is the Source of life and growth for those connected to Him by His Spirit). In John 8:2, Jesus called Himself "the Light of the World," yet He didn't regularly emit light during His Earthly Mission, (though He does enlighten those in spiritual darkness, and did create the sun, moon, and stars which do shed physical light on the world; cf. John 1:3). He also called men to "count the cost" of following Him (Luke 14: 28-30), to imaginatively envision the future (which hadn't happened yet) to help decide whether being Jesus' disciple was worth what it would cost them.

Without the exercise of imagination, Jesus could not have made these statements concerning Himself, nor could He expect men to understand and heed His Word. Any conception of Christ which does not take seriously His Humanity, including His Imagination, inevitably will lead to an expression of the Faith which not only wars against seeing imaginative expressions such as are all the branches of the arts as legitimate, but also results in the inability to even correctly understand (much less execute in our lives) what Scripture says. Imagination, so vital to the making and enjoyment of the arts, is also (as it was for the Lord Jesus) vital to Christianity. Let us not despise the Person and Example of our Lord, holding as worthless what He valued and has redeemed.

[kempercrabb.net]

Guest editorial by Tommy Green

Who do You Say That I AM?

I believe in personal transforming experiential relationship with Jesus, over modern day Religious ritual and habitual Sin-Management. Most of the people I meet in the body of Christ struggle with the concept of daily connected communal relationship with me, because there is a desire for, "Biblically Inspired Understanding," but really they don't spend the majority of their Christ-based life, or even just the Sunday service part discussing and training how to have unique, organic and deep relationship with me. In fact the God we sing songs about and read about and preach about, would call me the Spirit of Holy Inspiration. Yet really trusting me puts them in dangerous waters. They actually need a Personal understanding and track record with me called "relationship" in order to function in health together. Each of them has to know and trust and pursue Jesus Christ and grow in him with me. They are really afraid of allowing me to be the Me of the Bible. This is because the spirit of fear has dissected up the Body of Jesus according to their comfort levels within the realm of the Spirit and within their Soulish knowledge – especially in the realm of the Natural Mind. They have camped out in little territories all the while pretending to be family with each other but really believing that the others are, in fact, partners with Hell.

Taught that I AM God, they've been redeemed by the blood of Christ and filled with the same power that Jesus walked in. Somehow fear's more convincing than my discernment in them. I'm For Them. But they're convinced they'll be taken hostage from the one who purchased their lives with precious and Holy blood. Apparently relationship experience and time with Me is not real and they believe Hell is still more powerful than Jesus, who bought them. They don't really trust Me like Jesus trusted me. They think they'll be led astray by all of my horrible ideas about Jesus and still end up in Hell. I'm sure they really want to believe that We can guard them and keep them in his plan for them, but many have been instructed that my guidance to Jesus and within him is mystical and strange and cannot be trusted past the cross. They really don't trust Me! They say they're just, "cautious." They're just, "concerned." I Suppose I AM too.

Tommy Green is the vocalist for Sleeping Giant and has a new Book titled, *Religio-cide: a primer on dismantling the current religious structure for the sake of True Relationship* out now at www.createspace.com/3501947 and amazon.com

—Tommy Green
Sleeping Giant

Devotions with Greg Tucker

"What the Samaritan did was much more than simply "donate to a needy man."
Luke 10:25-37

The movie *Pay It Forward* continues to inspire random acts of kindness. You may recall that the lead character, 12-year-old Trevor McKinney, responds to a unique school assignment by developing a plan in which individuals repay good deeds not by paying them back, but by doing something for three new people. He claims that by paying it forward in this way, we can change the world.

I like that film, but a recent encounter made me question if, by literally paying it forward, we are actually buying our way out of doing a deeper work.

On Wednesdays I lead a Bible study for a group of 20-somethings in our home and every week I grab four Domino's pizzas to feed the crowd. One night, a homeless man was standing by the door at Domino's. He greeted me with a simple, "Hey, buddy," and my first thought was, "Okay, this is going to cost me a couple bucks." But the request never came.

Once inside, I began thinking about this guy. Obviously he's down on his luck, and he almost certainly lives on the street. It was a rough life. As I considered his story, I began to feel compassion for him and, on the way out, handed him a five-dollar bill.

The following Wednesday I returned to Domino's, and the same man was there. Again my heart was touched and I gave him five dollars. In fact, this would repeat itself so many times that I seriously wondered if I may have to issue this homeless person a W-2 at the end of year. Yet I felt good, because I was doing good. I was paying it forward.

But during my prayer time one day, his face came to mind with a clear message from God: "That man needs more than money. He needs you." Honestly, I'd rather have given him a raise, but the next week I went to Domino's a little early and, sure enough, there he was. I gave him the standard five bucks, then stuck out my hand and said, "My name's Greg. What's yours?" And over the next few weeks I got to know Curt and his story. And he got to know me.

I can't tell you that my new friendship is changing the world, but I'm being changed. It's making me look beyond peoples' problems and needs to see what's most important – people. People can experience God's love through me.

Today my unique friendship with a homeless man continues. Ultimately, I don't know if Curt sees Christ in me or not. But I know I see Christ in him.

POSTSCRIPT: The band Family Wagon is getting a lot of serious buzz in Southern California. They are talented, hard-rocking musicians who play in the secular market. Check them out at familywagon.wordpress.com

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at HopeCCA.com and is president of Tucker Signature Films in Beverly Hills. You can write him at TuckerG@mac.com]

g_editorial

guest editorial, God editorial
p-ed (opposite the editorial page)

mike reynold
guitaris
For Toda
mikefortoday@gmail.com

Life with the Holy Spirit is an everyday effort, to put ourselves into a place of surrender, to listen to his voice, and to experience his presence.

May this encourage you and edify you as children of God.

Here we go:

Now In the last couple issues we have talked about the greatness of God's love and how our identity is found only in knowing his affection for us. I want to go a little deeper into the love and care that God put into our design.

In Genesis 1:26-27 God says, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness... So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

He created us, male and female in his image and in his likeness. This is how we were designed to be, like God. The devil tempted Adam & Eve saying, "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The lie that Adam and Eve believed was that they weren't already "Like God," they forgot who they were, and whose image they bore.

I don't believe the devil's tactics have changed. While he doesn't deserve our focus, we can be aware of the simple lie he tells and that it is always to bring our identity and God's identity into question. Because of God's great love he sent Jesus to live perfectly, die in our place and defeat death itself at the resurrection so that we could see, have the right and be enabled to live once again as proud image bearers of God. This was the mysterious work of the cross. You are, by faith in Jesus, once again restored to be in his "image" and in his "likeness."

When we believe the truth that God speaks, then we empower the man known as "the truth" to rule and reign in our lives. By believing in his love for us and by believing what he says about the way he designed us, we find ourselves walking by faith and not by sight. No longer moved by what is seen with the eyes, but by what is believed in the heart.

My prayer is that we all will once again become "believers" who radically believe God in everything he says.

End.

Guest editorial by Chad Johnson

Are We Zealous Men?

Zeal in religion is a burning desire to please God, to do His will and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire which no man feels by nature, which the Spirit puts in the heart of every believer when he is converted, but which some believers feel so much more strongly than others that they alone deserve to be called "zealous" men.

This desire is so strong, when it really reigns in a man, that it impels him to make any sacrifice, to go through any trouble, to deny himself to any amount, to suffer, to work, to labor, to toil, to spend himself and be spent and even to die, if only he can please God and honor Christ.

A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thoroughgoing, whole-hearted and fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives or whether he dies, whether he has health or whether he has sickness, whether he is rich or whether he is poor, whether he pleases man or whether he gives offense, whether he is thought wise or whether he is thought foolish, whether he gets blame or whether he gets praise, whether he gets honor or whether he gets shame, for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is to please God and to advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it – he is content. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him. Such a one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach and work and give money, he will cry and sigh and pray. If he is cut off from working himself, he will give the Lord no rest 'till help is raised up from another quarter and the work is done. This is what I mean when I speak of "zeal" in religion.

[A description of zeal for God, given by Bishop J.C. Ryle]

Does our culture have this level of Zeal for anything? Do we, as Christians, even understand what it means to have feelings so strong for Jesus that we would do ANYTHING he asks? What will it take to get us there? I confess the years I've wasted in luke-warmness and invite God to ignite me for all things that bring glory to Him. Join me in this confession and in this zealous pursuit of Christ.

—Chad Johnson
Come&Live

PICK OF THE LITTER

☆ Kemper Crabb

When Jimmy Page and Robert Plant had made their millions with Led Zeppelin, they did what a good traveling minstrel would do – they traveled and absorbed world music. In particular, they picked up on the enthralling musical styles from the Middle East and they rocked it brilliantly on tunes like "Kashmir." When Page and Plant got together post-Zeppelin to make some more music, they revisited this style. That being said, instead of this album being influenced by classic rock legends, this instead will be an album that *those* guys will become inspirees and Kemper Crabb the inspirer. *Reliquarium* is filled with great, excellent work and layered with texture. When you have somebody that knows what they're doing, what separates that person from just any great artist is the foresight and know-how to pursue the right instrument and the right melody at the right time. He doesn't just rub your nose in eclectic instruments for art's sake. He won't suffer melodiousness in the pursuit of other-worldness. He uses good taste. These songs, great, classic hymns of the faith, sound fantastic. This approach could've been real cheesy pretty easy, but it's far from it. (Doug Van Pelt)
kempercrabb.com

☆ The Canvas Waiting

With one of the best names for a Christian alt-rock band ever, this quartet has just released a 7-song EP (*Chasing Color*) on their own. A wide range of modern influences (from U2 to Starflyer to Sleeping at Last), they're good song crafters.
thecanvaswaiting.com

Doug Powell

This artist has crafted an in-depth thematic album (*The Apprentice's Sorceren*) around the work of Harry Houdini. Layered electronic is the sometimes danceable, sometimes industrial musical backdrop. The first clue that this would be good was the inclusion of the paper "Magic Chinese Wallet" trinket mailed with the album. Nice.
dougpowell.com

Adeste

Three of these six band members sing, so it makes their intense brand of screamo/post-hardcore melodic rock all the more accessible and compelling. *In Parables* is a nice full-length with great artwork.
myspace.com/adesteband

Moshe Dayan

Named after a tough Israeli military commander, their *Prophets & Liars* album has a fitting aggression for this 6-piece band from Richmond, VA.
myspace.com/moshedayanrock

Tailgunner Joe

These raw rockers have an infectious energy and dirty rock sound that hearkens back to earlier days of classic rock while still sounding every bit as modern as a flavor-of-the-month genre band all the while playing around with pop punk, too. RIYL: Squad Five-O's latter years, The Presidents of the United States of America and The Heroine.
tailgunnerjoe.com

☆ The Rocketboys

One of Austin's better indie rock bands at the moment (transplanted from Abilene), *Wellwisher* is their latest 5-song EP, with full and atmospheric sounds that'll pull you in to their sing-along.
facebook.com/therocketboys

Destroy Nate Allen

One of our favorite punk rock couples, Nate and Tessa Allen. As raw and street-level as possible (with only an acoustic guitar and passionate vocals), they'll play anywhere. Book 'em for a house show! Almost any of their tunes would've fit nicely on the Juno soundtrack.
destroynateallen.com

Sal Paradise

This Tooth & Nail veteran is still cranking away, making music in his home of Australia. His latest, *Yesterday, Today & Forever* has 20 tunes of heart-warming lo-fi indie rock in the vein of Pavement. Not to be confused with the same-named artist from the UK.
salparadise.org

Rex Paul

This talented guitarist left Austin a long time ago to get work in Nashville. His guitar prowess has been utilzed quite a bit as both a sessions guy and touring musician. Surfin' In A Hurrican is his latest solo album. More than just a noodler, he's got a good voice and takes on a variety of sounds.
rexpaulmusic.com

Eli

Soli Deo gloria! is the latest EP from this multi-instrument, multi-vocal ambient experimental music band that makes Houston, TX, home. A band that would do well on a double bill with Anathallo.
myspace.com/heyeli

Invisible Target

This young band mixes a nice melodic pop punk sound with a good amount of fuzz, distortion and energy.
myspace.com/invisibletarget

Shake Azalia

This band from Asheville, NC, sent us their *Everyone Will Get What They Deserve* EP in a custom lunchbox. VA. More often than not these kind of cool packages are all style and no substance. In other words, they usually suck, but this band rocks! Six members crank out some loud, melodic screamo.
myspace.com/shakeazalia

LM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

Brian "Head" Welch
Times of Grace
As They Sleep
A Day To Remember
Showbread
Venia
Memphis May Fire
ACL Festival Recap

THE CHARIOT

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January, February 2011 • *Issue #147*
$3.99 USA / 4.50 CDN

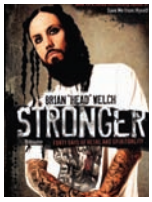
LIFEstyle

I AM
Take the left-of-center character of God from the book *The Shack* (also played by a lovable African American) and mix it with the jump-around pace of the movie *Crash* and you'll get the delivery of this modern adaptation of *The Ten Commandments*. Pretty cool, though a little short of the aforementioned benchmarks.
[Fox Home Entertainment] *Doug Van Pelt*
[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

THE EXPENDABLES
Loaded with talent, this action film mixes the bullets, laughs, chases and explosions well. While worth multiple viewings, it seems to embrace the genre's clichés rather than rise above them. There's a hilarious and all-too-short cameo appearance by California's governor inside a church sanctuary with Stallone and Willis. [Fox Home Entertainment] *DV*
[Cuss: 23 | Gore: 7 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 50]

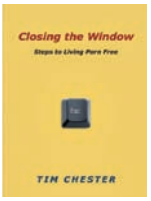
WALL STREET: MONEY NEVER SLEEPS
Like Stone's prequel, this film does a brilliant job of pulling us into the cast of characters. While heroes and villains show contradictory sides of each, it's easy to hate and/or love them. It's uncanny how current and prophetic the story's backdrop appears to be. [Fox Home Entertainment] *DV*
[Cuss: 16 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 70]

STRONGER | BRIAN HEAD WELCH
Head's second book is a 40-day devotional with fun and fascinating anecdotes from his life that expound upon a Scripture passage. While not the most brilliant theologian of all time, his matter-of-fact tone and raw style are completely street-level and relatable. [HarperOne] *DV*



BY HIS STRYPES | BRETT CHRISTENSEN
This is a beautiful picture book that was put together with the full cooperation of Stryper, which means it features tons of fantastic photos from its multi-platinum career. Some great iconic moments are shared side-by-side with rare glimpses behind the scenes. [Wisconsin Music] *DV*

CLOSING THE WINDOW | TIM CHESTER
Porn is everywhere, easy to access, easy to become addicted. In Christ we are made new and given a desire to be like Jesus. Chester's book outlines five A's: abhorrence of porn, adoration of God, assurance of grace, avoidance of temptation and accountability to others. Is is not enough to remove porn from our lives, we must fill our lives with the glory of God. The author deals with the issues that lead to porn: boredom, loneliness, depression; as well as the causes of addiction: desire for power, desire to be worshipped. He states that trying to kick the habit by ourselves will lead to pride and self-justification. By confessing our sin to God and to each other, we receive forgiveness and grace. The pleasure of God is more satisfying than pleasure of porn. [IVP] *Steve McNulty* (CAMPA - Confidential Accountability Ministry for Porn Addiction)



WD TV LIVE HUB
This little device, though not the first, is on the cutting edge of technology and our corresponding lifestyles. Take your HDTV and pull up media (music, pics, videos) from your wireless network – and don't forget the internet. With a small remote and an aesthetically nice on-screen menu, it takes the next step to a computerized media center. Bravo!
[westerndigital.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: B- | Performance: A | Price: $199]

AIRCURVE
This is the perfect little attention-getter/conversation-starter for your desk at work. A powerless amplification system with channels like an inner ear or seashell that acoustically amplifies your iPod/iPhone's tunes. It doesn't crank (adding just 10dB), but for a small indoor space, it's convenient and sufficient.
[griffintechnology.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: A- | Performance: B+ | Price: $19]

WATER CLOCK
When it comes to saving energy, this clock can't be beat. No batteries … not even solar energy. This thing has a couple chambers that you fill with water and the negative and positive ions in the H_2O do their stuff.
[bedol.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: A | Performance: A+ | Price: $39]

KUNG FU LIVE
Kung Fu Live for the PS3 brings a whole new level of gaming. Using the Playstation Eye, players are emerged into a side-scrolling Kung Fu world. Using any object found around the house as a Kung Fu butt-kicking weapon to knock out any and every baddie. So players can beat down the thugs with a rolled-up HM...WIN. Every movement is implemented into the game so that the player can pull of some sweet ninja-style flips and powers that *Mortal Kombat* would be impressed by. *Doug Christiansen*
[Setup Ease: B+ | Performance: B | Price: $14]
[Check out Gamechurch's first look at *Kung Fu Live* at PAX 2010: http://tiny.cc/Kung-Fu]

TEACH YOURSELF ACOUSTIC GUITAR PACK
Having perfected their self-paced guitar instruction software, eMedia have made learning even easier with all you need: a nice Sequoia beginner's acoustic guitar; software with chord charts, lessons, a tuner, video and audio lessons to learn on. With an affordable price, it's easy to get motivated. [emedia.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A | Price: $99]

MARSHALL HEADPHONES
This genius move, which includes major style and substance, should've happened a long time ago. All-black cushioned headphones with one of the most recognizable brands in rock deliver a killer sound with a major kick. I love the details, like the coiled cable and the gold-plated jack. They fold up for tote-able storage. The only drawback is size. I have to use the largest setting to get them to fit and, even though I'm an ego-maniac, my head ain't that big!
[marshallheadphones.com] *DV* [Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: $99]

CHRISTIANS ARE BEING JAILED IN CHINA